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About the CTC Sentinel

The Combating Terrorism Center is an independent educational and research institution based in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point. The CTC Sentinel harnesses the Center's global network of scholars and practitioners to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

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AQAP's Soft Power Strategy in Yemen

By Barak Barfi



AL-QA`IDA IN THE ARABIAN Peninsula (AQAP) is currently the most successful of the three al-Qa`ida affiliates operating in the Arab world.¹ Unlike its sibling partners, AQAP has neither been plagued by internecine conflicts nor has it clashed with its tribal hosts. It has also launched two major terrorist attacks against the U.S. homeland that were only foiled by a combination of luck and the help of foreign intelligence agencies.²

AQAP has avoided many of the domestic battles that weakened other al-Qa`ida affiliates by pursuing a shrewd strategy at home in Yemen.³ The group has sought to focus its efforts on its primary enemies—the Yemeni and Saudi governments, as well as the United States—rather than distracting itself by combating minor domestic adversaries that would only complicate its grand strategy. Some analysts have argued that this stems from the lessons the group learned from al-Qa`ida's failed campaigns in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq. While true to some extent, AQAP's policies are more the result of the realities it faces in a constricting Yemeni theater. Factors

1 Its siblings, in this case, refer to al-Qa`ida in Iraq and al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb.

2 These two attacks include the attempt by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab to detonate an explosive device on a Northwest Airlines flight as it approached Detroit on December 25, 2009, as well as the attempt to detonate explosives-laden packages on cargo planes bound for the United States in October 2010.

3 For a discussion of AQAP's strategy, see Barak Barfi, "How Attacking AQAP Influenced Its Strategy," *NATO Review* 5 (2010). For biographies of AQAP's leadership and other details, see Barak Barfi, "Yemen on the Brink? The Resurgence of al Qaeda in Yemen," *New America Foundation*, January 2010.

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unique to Yemen but largely absent in other countries where al-Qa`ida operates necessitate adopting a soft touch.

This article details AQAP's "soft power" strategy at home, highlighting the group's positions toward the southern socialists as well as the country's Shi'a, who are known as the Zaydis. As a result of its domestic maneuvering, AQAP is at times less of an international jihadist group than it is just another Yemeni organization battling the regime in Sana'a and playing by ever shifting local rules. Nevertheless, this article contends that AQAP's "soft" approach at home is merely a tactical strategy since the group views itself as too weak to confront multiple enemies at this time. Indeed, AQAP remains firmly in the ideological camp of Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi and the Taliban.

The Southern Socialists

AQAP's attitudes toward Yemen's southern socialists and how they differ from those of other Yemeni Islamists are indicative of this soft touch. Before a 1990 union, Yemen was divided between northern and southern states. By 1994, the southerners, the weaker of the two parties, had soured on the merger and attempted to secede. In the run-up to a civil war, a number of Yemeni Islamists issued *fatawa* (religious edicts) denouncing the Yemeni Socialist Party that ruled South Yemen and which was leading the secessionist charge. Chief among them was 'Abd al-Majid al-Zindani, Yemen's most famous Islamist. He demonized the socialists, calling them "idol worshippers" and compared them to the Prophet Muhammad's enemies in Mecca.⁴ He urged the region's inhabitants to "persuade Arab rulers that fighting the Yemeni (Socialists) is lawful, against a group of dissenting heretic infidels. Fighting it is a (religious) duty."⁵ His ally, 'Abd

al-Wahhab al-Daylami, who later became justice minister, made similar comments, declaring, "not killing these Muslims (the Socialists) leads to a greater corruption."⁶

AQAP, in contrast, takes a much more subdued approach toward the southern socialists. In an interview with a Yemeni journalist, AQAP's leader, Nasir al-Wahayshi, commented, "we know that many of you crave freedom and reject

"Whereas the Taliban enforced an uncompromising form of Islam, AQAP has tolerated the un-Islamic practices of the clans that shelter it. Whereas al-Zarqawi turned on his tribal hosts, AQAP has merely engaged in verbal spats with Yemeni tribes."

tyranny, despotism, humility and subjugation. But you have followed an erroneous path."⁷ Whereas al-Zindani preached fire and brimstone against the southern socialists, al-Wahayshi instead adopts a gentle "fatherly" tone toward children who have erred.

AQAP's mild position does not stem from love of the socialists or their ideals. Instead, it derives from the realities of Yemeni geopolitics. AQAP has adopted this approach to curry favor with southerners, which it needs for both popular support and tribal protection. The disgruntled population in the south is hostile to the regime of President Ali Abdullah Salih and is thus susceptible to calls by groups opposed to it.

Sectarian tensions equally explain AQAP's position. The group has sought to establish strongholds in the tribal

areas of the country that have historically been disaffected by the regime's policies. Most of these regions are in provinces where a Shi'a sect known as the Zaydis preponderates. The clans there are hostile to groups such as AQAP since it belongs to the puritanical Salafi creed that loathes the Shi'a.⁸ Since making inroads with these tribes is a herculean task, AQAP has instead focused its attention on the Sunni tribal regions, which are almost exclusively in the south. This explains why AQAP's bastions are located in the provinces of Marib, Shabwa and Abyan where the population is overwhelmingly Sunni.

Alienating the locals and their leaders by embracing al-Zindani's views on the socialists and the *ancien régime* would hamper the organization's ability to operate there. As such, AQAP's soft touch toward the socialists springs from political necessity rather than affection for their cause.

The Zaydis

Although the sectarian divide between AQAP and the Shi'a Zaydis has the potential to degenerate into open conflict, al-Wahayshi and his cadres have until recently attempted to minimize tensions between the two groups. To this end, the organization has emphasized the admirable elements of Zaydism. It has showered praise on the progeny of the Prophet Muhammad, known as *ahl al-bayt*, from which the leaders of Shi'ism descend.⁹ AQAP has highlighted the fact that 'Ali, the first Shi'a leader and fourth caliph, is one of the 10 Muslims promised entrance into heaven.¹⁰ It has argued that he was wronged by the usurper and founder of the Umayyad dynasty, Mu'awiyya, positions rarely emphasized in the circles AQAP frequents. It has gone so far as to claim that Yemenis "are endeared to the Zaydi school."¹¹

4 Such accusations are among the worst a Muslim can hurl at his co-religionists because they paint them as enemies of Islam. These quotes come from a speech recorded on June 10, 1994, available on a cassette entitled "The Duty of the Islamic Nation Towards the Battle."

5 Ibid. These are loaded terms with an Islamic significance. For the significance of the term dissenter (*baghi*), see Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1955), pp. 77-79; Alfred Morabia, *Le Gihâd dans l'Islam médiéval* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1993), p. 300. For the term heretic (*mulhid*), see Bernard Lewis, "Some Observations

on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam," *Studia Islamica* 1 (1953).

6 *Sawt al-Iman* [Sana'a], June 21, 1994.

7 See the interview with Abd Illah Haydar Sha'a, available at www.abdulela.maktoobblog.com. This source will hereafter be cited as "Wahayshi Interview."

8 For Salafism, see Bernard Rougier ed., *Qu'est-ce que le Salafisme?* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008).

9 Abu'l-Bara'a al-Sana'ani, "The Huthis are Rafidis in the Guise of the Zaydis," *Sada al-Malahim*, No. 12, February 2010. For the *ahl al-bayt* in Islamic thought, see Moshe Sharon, *Black Banners From the East* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983), pp. 75-82.

10 Wahayshi Interview.

11 Al-Sana'ani.

AQAP's moderate tone toward the Zaydis contrasts with that of other Yemeni Salafists, although the two draw on a common religious heritage. The founder of Yemeni Salafism, Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi'i (c. 1930-2001), struck an uncompromising stance vis-à-vis the Shi'a sect into which he was born.¹² He criticized the competence of their scholars¹³ and cast aspersions on their doctrines, saying, "it is incumbent upon a Muslim to disassociate himself from these innovations and deviations (of the Zaydis)."¹⁴ His adherents are not content with rhetorical lashings; they have shattered the tombstones of Zaydi leaders and disrupted religious celebrations and prayers in their mosques.¹⁵

Al-Wadi'i's hostility toward Zaydism derives from the discrimination he suffered at the hands of the Zaydi elite. Since his tribe neither belonged to the judicial caste nor descended from the *ahl al-bayt*, he could not aspire to be a religious leader in the community.¹⁶ This led him to abandon Zaydism and

embrace Salafism, only intensifying his conflict with the Zaydi leadership. When he established a Salafist center in the Zaydi stronghold of Sa'da in 1979, he again encountered resistance at the hands of their aristocracy and even received death threats.¹⁷

Since the Zaydis posed a grave danger to him, al-Wadi'i focused all his efforts on combating them. Yet until recently, AQAP considered the Zaydis an insignificant adversary. The organization deferred sparring with them and instead concentrated on its chief enemies—the Yemeni and Saudi

"At this stage of the battle, where AQAP is still weak and the arena full of adversaries, it has chosen pragmatism over ideology."

regimes and their superpower patron. Clashing with the Zaydis would divert the organization from its larger goal and embroil it in local conflicts that would win it few friends at home and abroad. As a result, the organization's soft touch does not derive from its desire to be the region's "Good Samaritan," but from *realpolitik*.

AQAP, however, has sparred with a splinter Zaydi movement known as the Huthis that has been sporadically fighting the regime since 2004. The Huthis' message has proved controversial in Zaydi circles, and they have alienated leading political and religious leaders of the sect. The intra-sectarian feud has rendered the rebels unable to mobilize the Zaydi population behind their program.

For its part, AQAP has sought to highlight the differences between the Huthis and the doctrines of other Zaydis. It has depicted the rebels as Iranian proxies bent on corrupting traditional Zaydi practices.¹⁸ As a result, AQAP considers the Huthis to be outside the pale of Zaydism.

Although AQAP has long limited its conflict with the Huthis to the verbal arena, it appears the dissidents forced its hand by turning over al-Qa'ida members to the authorities. In late November, for example, a bomb ripped through a funeral procession and pilgrims on their way to religious celebrations in Huthi strongholds. While it is too soon to conclude that AQAP was behind the bombing or even offer a definitive explanation—indeed other factors are undoubtedly involved and suggest a more international motive—it appears that retaliation spurred AQAP to take the offensive.¹⁹

AQAP's Two-Level Game Strategy

AQAP's Shi'a dilemma is that its sympathetic views toward the Zaydis do not win it support in Saudi Arabia where it recruits and fundraises.²⁰ In Saudi Arabia, the Shi'a are esteemed as "chattel," and little attempt is made to differentiate between their various sects.²¹ The religious scholars denigrate the Shi'a, while the government discriminates against them.²² State clergy regularly term them infidels, and one senior cleric even said killing them was not a sin.²³ As a result, any suspicion

12 For a brief English account of al-Wadi'i and his theology, see François Burgat, *Islamism in the Shadow of al-Qaeda* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008), pp. 22-27.

13 Al-Wadi'i warned against using their manuals in matters of *hadith*, or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, noting that "they have no knowledge in the science of *hadith*." See his *Sa'aqat al-Zilzal liNasf al-Abatil Abl al-Rafd w'al-I tizal* (The Screech of the Earthquake to Destroy the Falsehoods of the Rafidis and Mu'tazilis).

14 Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi'i, *Maqtal al-Shaykh Jamil al-Rahman al-Afghani* (Sana'a: Dar al-Athar, 2005), p. 55. The term innovation (*bid'a*) has historical Islamic significance and is among the most important concepts for Salafists. For its historical importance, see Lewis, pp. 52-53. For its use by the spiritual forefather of Salafists, Ibn Taymiyya, see Henri Laoust, *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Taki-d-din Ahmad b. Taymiyya* (Cairo: L'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1939), pp. 228, 264, nt. 5 and 272. For its primary place in Salafist thought, see al-Wadi'i, *Sa'aqat al-Zilzal liNasf al-Abatil Abl al-Rafd w'al-I tizal*.

15 For the Salafi-Zaydi conflict, see Shelagh Weir, "A Clash of Fundamentalisms: Wahhabism in Yemen," *Middle East Report*, July-September 1997; Laurent Bonnefoy, *Les Relations Religieuses Transnationales Contemporaines entre le Yémen et l'Arabie Saoudite: un Salafisme <<importé>>?*, unpublished doctoral thesis, Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, 2007.

16 For al-Wadi'i's difficulties with Zaydis in his youth, see Bonnefoy, François Burgat and Muhammad Sbitli, "Les Salafis au Yémen ou...La Modernisation Malgré Tout," *Chroniques Yéménites* 10:2 (2002).

17 Bonnefoy, Bernard Haykel, "The Salafis in Yemen at a Crossroads," *Jemen-Report*, 2002.

18 Al-Sana'ani.

19 AQAP reportedly took responsibility for the attack. See "Al-Qaida Claims Attack on Yemen Shiites," Associated Press, November 28, 2010.

20 For AQAP's Saudi component and monetary sources, see Barfi, "Yemen on the Brink? The Resurgence of al-Qaeda in Yemen," pp. 3, 4, 6, 8-9.

21 For historical Wahhabi enmity toward Zaydism, see the comments of Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Latif, the great-grandson of the Wahhabi founder, Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab, where he states, "We disassociate ourselves from the doctrines of the Zaydis and other innovators." See Sulayman bin Sahman al-Najdi ed., *al-Hidayya al-Sunniyya w'al-Tuhfa al-Wahhabiyya al-Najdiyya* (Cairo: al-Manar, 1923/4), p. 98. For contemporary Wahhabis' complete ignorance of Zaydi practices, see the *fatwa* of the kingdom's former Grand Mufti Shaykh Abdul Aziz bin Baz which he was forced to renounce, entitled "Opinion Concerning Praying Behind One Who Confesses Exaggeration With Respect to the Prophets and the Pious Ones."

22 For the Wahhabi-Shi'a polemic, see Isaac Hasson, "Contemporary Polemics Between Neo-Wahhabis and Post-Khomeinist Shiites," Hudson Institute, September 2009. For the social discrimination the Shi'a face, see "Denied Dignity - Systematic Discrimination and Hostility Toward Saudi Shia Citizens," Human Rights Watch, September 2009.

23 Adil al-Kalbani, the imam of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, told the BBC Arabic satellite channel in May 2009, "as for their scholars, I declare them to be infidels."

that AQAP harbors affection for the Shi'a and their beliefs would damage the group in the eyes of the kingdom's puritanical religious population. Such a stance risks drawing the ire of all the kingdom's subjects in light of the 2009 clashes between the Saudi military and the Huthis, in which at least 133 Saudi soldiers died.²⁴

To parry such charges, the organization has issued articles rebuking the mainstream Shi'a known as the Twelvers, thus burnishing its Salafist and jihadist credentials.²⁵ In doing so, AQAP has adopted a division of labor of the Twelver-Zaydi file, playing what the political scientist Robert Putnam calls "two level games" in addressing local and international constituencies.²⁶ Sympathetic articles toward the Zaydis are penned by AQAP's Yemenis so as not to alienate them, while anti-Twelver pieces and recordings are issued by the organization's Saudis to target their nationals.

An excellent example of this is an article by AQAP's theological guide Ibrahim al-Rubaysh, who is from Saudi Arabia.²⁷ In a recent issue of AQAP's journal, *Sada al-Malahim* (*Echo of Battles*), he penned a diatribe against the Shi'a. Although presumably written in Yemen, it makes no sense to Yemenis. The article speaks of the Shi'a in the

"Eastern Province,"²⁸ but the Zaydis reside in Yemen's central plateau and highlands. It further speaks of the Shi'a celebrating the festival of Ashura, but the Zaydis do not.²⁹ It also refers to market items such as headdresses that are not sold in Yemen.³⁰

In fact, these references are all Saudi in nature. Saudi Arabia's Shi'a reside largely in the oases of al-Hasa and Qatif, located in the Eastern Province, where they account for up to 33% of the population.³¹ They also celebrate Ashura. Yet at no point does al-Rubaysh indicate the article is speaking of Saudi Arabia. He assumes his readers will understand the references. This indicates that this is a Saudi authored article for a Saudi audience. It also leads to the conclusion that Shi'a polemics are distributed individually in Saudi jihadist circles rather than as part of *Sada al-Malahim* where readers can glean AQAP's complex views on the sect. Other significant AQAP diatribes against the Shi'a were issued by Saudis as well, only validating the view that the organization is seeking to use the kingdom's citizens to target their compatriots on this delicate topic.³²

28 Ibrahim al-Rubaysh, "The Rafidiyya...and the Stages of Confrontation," *Sada al-Malahim*, No. 11, October 2009.

29 They do, however, celebrate Ghadir Khumm, the festival commemorating 'Ali's investiture. See Franck Mermier, "Recit D'Origine et Rituel D'Allegiance," *Peuples Méditerranéens*, 1991.

30 The passage in question speaks of purchasing an *'uqal* in a market. The word does not exist in this context in Yemeni Arabic. In pre-modern usage, it connotes a tribal chieftain. See Moshe Piamenta, *Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), p. 335 where he states it connotes a tribal chieftain. It is used in this manner in the *Kitab al-Tabyin*, an 18th century text on tribal law. A German scholar translated the word as *Sippenführer*, head of the clan or tribe. See Christoph Rauch, "Die jemenitischen higras zwischen Stamm und Staat," in Michael Kemper and Maurus Reinkowski eds., *Rechtspluralismus in der Islamischen Welt* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), p. 79. It is, however, an item people in Persian Gulf countries find in the market. There it connotes the headband worn by men. See Hamdi Qafisheh, *NTC's Gulf Arabic-English Dictionary* (Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill, 1997), p. 438.

31 Graham Fuller and Rend Rahim Francke, *The Arab Shi'a* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. 180.

32 Abu Sufyan al-Azdi, "The Rafida and the Arabian Peninsula," *Sada al-Malahim*, No. 12, February 2010; Abu Sufyan al-Azdi, "The Sunnis Between the Rafidi Hammer and the Collaborators' Anvil," *Sada al-Malahim*,

Choosing Pragmatism Over Ideology

AQAP's views on Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi and the Taliban should dispel any doubt that the organization's moderate positions toward the southern socialists and the Zaydis stem from conviction rather than necessity. Although the harsh tactics employed by al-Zarqawi led to his downfall and sullied the reputation of jihadism in many Islamic circles, both he and the Taliban are esteemed by AQAP as models to emulate.

Ignorance of the policies of the black sheep of jihadism does not lie at the heart of AQAP's veneration because a number of the group's leaders lived in Afghanistan under the Taliban. AQAP's chief, Nasir al-Wahayshi, resided in the country during the Taliban's entire five

"This partially explains why the U.S. homeland is in AQAP's crosshairs. Attacking the superpower wins it friends everywhere and even admiration from its adversaries."

year emirate.³³ He was also the personal secretary of al-Qa'ida leader Usama bin Ladin. Al-Wahayshi remembers his time in Afghanistan as an idyllic period where justice and stability reigned, noting that "the Shari'a courts and judges did not treat anyone in the country of the Taliban unjustly."³⁴ For him, the severe penalties they meted out such as beating men whose beards were too short and preventing kite flying were justified.³⁵ The Taliban are also often cited in *Sada al-Malahim* as one of the organizations at the forefront of the fight against the enemies of Islam.

No. 13, May 2010. Also see a recording by Muhammad al-Rashid entitled "I am a Sincere Advisor to You." The organization has made passing comments about the Shi'a in several other articles, but nothing as comprehensive as the four items issued by the Saudis.

33 Wahayshi Interview.

34 Ibid.

35 For Taliban justice, see Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 105-116.

See www.youtube.com/watch?v=TytRBiZaxI. For the comments of Abdallah bin Jibrin rendering Shi'a blood licit, see Mamoun Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), p. 206.

24 Robert Worth, "Saudi Border with Yemen is Still Inviting for Al Qaeda," *New York Times*, October 26, 2010.

25 The Shi'a split with the orthodox Sunnis over the right to rule the Islamic community, or *umma*. The Shi'a believe in hereditary rule, holding only the *abl al-bayt* descended from Muhammad's daughter Fatima and her husband 'Ali can claim leadership over the *umma*. Over time, they too split over who was the rightful imam, or leader. The mainstream Twelvers believe there were twelve imams. The Ismailis disagreed with them concerning the seventh imam. The Zaydis broke off from the Twelvers after the fourth imam. They are considered the most moderate Shi'a vis-à-vis the Sunnis. For a brief introduction to Shi'ism, see Etan Kohlberg, "The Evolution of the Shi'a," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 27 (1983).

26 Robert Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42:3 (1988).

27 For al-Rubaysh's biography, see Barfi, "Yemen on the Brink? The Resurgence of al Qaeda in Yemen," p. 3.

AQAP's high regard for the Taliban pales in comparison to their veneration of al-Zarqawi. He ranks in their pantheon of heroes, a notch below Bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri.³⁶ The organization has reproduced his writings and speeches,³⁷ and it has wholeheartedly embraced the Jordanian's stance on the Shi'a, a position that drew al-Zarqawi criticism from al-Qa`ida's leadership and the larger Islamic community.³⁸ It has cited his views on several occasions and urged readers to consult his works on the Shi'a.³⁹ It has preached al-Zarqawi's Shi'a gospel to the point where the words it uses to describe the sect come straight out of his canon.⁴⁰ AQAP's relationship with al-Zarqawi was so good that he allegedly ordered the organization to carry out a September 2006 attack on Yemeni oil installations.⁴¹

Despite the admiration AQAP has professed for jihadism's black sheep, it has done everything it can to avoid adopting the policies that doomed them. Rather, it has embraced a milder agenda. Whereas the Taliban enforced an uncompromising form of Islam, AQAP has tolerated the un-Islamic practices of the clans that shelter it.⁴² Whereas al-Zarqawi turned on his tribal hosts, AQAP has merely engaged in verbal spats with Yemeni tribes.⁴³

AQAP has not chosen such strategies out of altruism. Its sympathies lie with the black sheep's dogma, but the organization understands that these ideas cannot be applied in Yemen at this time. At this stage of the battle, where AQAP is still weak and the arena full of adversaries, it has chosen pragmatism over ideology. It simply cannot fight on all fronts and has instead focused its efforts on combating foes that gain it the most admiration among Yemenis, without entangling the group in superfluous feuds and causing unnecessary hardships. This partially explains why the U.S. homeland is in AQAP's crosshairs. Attacking the superpower wins it friends everywhere and even admiration from its adversaries. As such, AQAP defies the simple categorization of fighting "far" and "near" enemies.

Nevertheless, AQAP's calculating strategy and patient foresight is a clear cause for concern since it may mean that the group will not contribute to its own demise as was the case with al-Zarqawi's al-Qa`ida affiliate in Iraq. AQAP is a formidable adversary, the likes of which the United States has not encountered since al-Qa`ida melted away into the snow-capped mountains of Afghanistan's Tora Bora. A unique strategy will be required to defeat it.

Barak Barfi writes about Arab and Islamic affairs. He was recently a Visiting Fellow with the Brookings Doha Center. Previously, he was a producer with ABC News affiliates in the Middle East where he reported from countries such as Iraq and Lebanon. His articles have appeared in numerous publications including the Washington Post and Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst.

Developing Policy Options for the AQAP Threat in Yemen

By Gabriel Koehler-Derrick

THE RECENT ATTEMPT by al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) to mail package bombs likely designed to detonate in spectacular fashion over the United States has refocused attention on Yemen and the multifaceted security threats that loom over the poorest state in the Arab world.¹ Media discussions of the policy tools under review in Washington to combat AQAP outline a common set of assumptions and logic for how to proceed: increase military aid and training,² escalate drone activity,³ and utilize soft power mechanisms (primarily aid for economic development) to bolster the government of President Ali Abdullah Salih.⁴ While experts may disagree on the appropriate balance between these tools, the conventional wisdom suggests that some combination of these three different policy mechanisms will be essential if the United States is to succeed in convincing the Salih government to confront AQAP more aggressively.

This analysis is incomplete because it ignores the fact that large increases in economic aid and military resources to the Yemeni government are likely to increase tensions with the political opposition (which Salih has always viewed as a bigger challenge to his authority than al-Qa`ida) and with tribal leaders hostile to the Salih regime. This is because these key actors in Yemen's decentralized political system are likely to feel threatened by the consolidation of resources and power in the central

36 See, for example, the praise the organization heaps on him in "Yusuf's Seminary Peace Be Upon Him," *Sada al-Malahim*, No. 1, January 2008.

37 *Sada al-Malahim*, No. 8, March 2009; *Sada al-Malahim*, No. 10, August 2009.

38 For a partial translation of an al-Zarqawi speech AQAP has twice cited, see Barak Barfi, "The Great Divide," *Jerusalem Report*, October 1, 2007.

39 Ibrahim al-Rubaysh, "The Rafidiyya...and the Stages of Confrontation," *Sada al-Malahim*, No. 11, October 2009; Wahayshi Interview.

40 In his interview with Sha'a, al-Wahayshi noted the Shi'a engaged in "idle talk" (*khuza'balat*). The word is rarely used in Arabic, but does surface in al-Zarqawi's speeches.

41 Wahayshi Interview. Also, for details on the attack, see Hassan Fattah, "Suicide Attacks Foiled at 2 Oil Sites, Yemen Says," *New York Times*, September 16, 2006.

42 For how tribal law differs from Islamic Shari'a in Yemen, Carl Rathjens' article still remains the best introduction: "Tâgh`t gegen Scher`a," *Jahrbuch des Linden-Museums*, 1951, pp. 172-187.

43 For AQAP's relationship with its tribal hosts, see Barfi, "Yemen on the Brink? The Resurgence of al Qaeda in Yemen," p. 8 and the works of Sarah Phillips.

1 Duncan Gardham, "Parcel Bomb Set to Go Off Over the US Police Say," *Telegraph*, November 10, 2010.

2 Most experts estimate that this will be somewhere around \$250 million per year for a five-year period. See "US Funding Boost is Sought for Yemen Forces," *Wall Street Journal*, September 2, 2010. A Yemeni government spokesman recently stated that Yemen wants \$6 billion in total aid over two years. See "Yemen Wants Much More US Aid to Fight Terrorism," Associated Press, November 9, 2010.

3 Greg Miller and Peter Finn, "CIA Sees Increased Threat from al-Qaeda in Yemen," *Washington Post*, August 24, 2010.

4 Marisa Porges, "Saving Yemen," *Foreign Affairs*, November 16, 2010.

government that will accompany large increases in aid. Without assurances from President Salih that in exchange for U.S. aid he will engage the political opposition and respect their right to organize and protest, U.S. assistance could end up backfiring. To fully appreciate this point and understand the hidden trade-offs inherent in the policy tools currently under consideration, two crucial points must be recognized:

1. The Yemeni state is not failing. Yemen's decentralized political order and the system of tribal law (*urf*) that governs much of the country are too often mistaken as leading indicators of state failure. Nothing could be further from the truth. As one scholar recently noted, the rural areas of Yemen where tribal law and custom are the organizing principles for daily life are better understood as "alternatively governed" rather than "ungoverned" regions.⁵ A far more serious challenge to Yemen's future than the continued importance of tribal law stems from declining oil revenues and a rapidly diminishing water table that in recent years has dipped to historic lows. Nevertheless, the Yemeni state will endure as long as it avoids civil war. Policymakers must be aware that the policy tools under consideration will ultimately be counterproductive if they de-incentivize negotiations between the Salih government and the complex constellation of actors that compose the Yemeni political opposition. This is crucial because AQAP's long-term survival is predicated on its ability to manipulate the legitimate grievances of Yemen's political opposition to its own advantage.⁶

2. Anti-Americanism must not be confused with support for AQAP. Many journalists and analysts write about Yemen as if it was a readymade recruiting factory for AQAP.⁷ This perspective ignores the large rifts that exist between AQAP and many former jihadists, to say nothing of the

Yemeni population—even though anti-American sentiment is widespread.⁸ Currently, AQAP utilizes U.S. support for the Salih regime in its propaganda, and Nasir al-Wahayshi, AQAP's leader, has stated that AQAP supports the secessionist southern movement.⁹ If the Salih government engages in formal discussions with the opposition, recognizes the legitimacy of their grievances and is willing to make some discrete concessions, AQAP will lose a major propaganda and recruiting tool.

A Decentralized, Not Failing State

The most violent periods in the long arc of Yemen's history have occurred as a result of attempts to disregard convention and centralize political power in the state. In northern Yemen for almost 1,000 years, different groups took up arms against the Shi'a Zaydi imam, the political and spiritual leader of the northern Zaydi community, when he was perceived to take too much political power.¹⁰ More recently, cliques such as the group of Arab nationalists that deposed the imam in the Northern Civil War that lasted from 1962 to 1970 have encountered similar resistance when they tried to extend their authority over that of local tribes without acknowledging their grievances. Invariably the cycle is the same in Yemen: too much centralization of power in the state leads to political overreach that alienates tribal factions, who rise up in rebellion to reassert their independence and territorial control.

8 This generational gap and divisions between jihadists is presented in Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, "Al-Qaida in Yemen: Poverty, Corruption and an Army of Jihadis Willing to Fight," *Guardian*, August 22, 2010. A 2006 interview with the head of the opposition al-Islah party, Shaykh Abdullah bin Hussein al-Ahmar, provides evidence of a more conventional split between globally-oriented jihadists such as al-Qa`ida and Islamist leaders such as al-Ahmar who are certainly virulently anti-American, praise Hamas in their rhetoric and are critical of the government yet are not advocates for global jihad. See Hussein al-Jibrani, "Asharq Al-Awsat Talks to Yemeni MP Sheikh Abdullah Bin-Hussein al-Ahmar," *Asharq al-Awsat*, December 25, 2006.

9 This statement came via a recorded message entitled, "To Our People in the South," from AQAP's leader Nasir al-Wahayshi. The statement was discussed in Mareb Press on May 13, 2009.

10 The Zaydis, while nominally a Shi'a sect, are much closer to Sunnis in terms of religious practice.

In contrast, stability in Yemen has been achieved by those leaders who, while militarily strong, were aware of the limits inherent in Yemen's decentralized political system. The most successful Zaydi imams were highly adept at ceding authority, particularly religious and legal, to their Shafi'i subjects.¹¹ While President Salih has ruled for decades, he did participate in an election, a first in this region of monarchs, in which his primary rival won 20% of the vote.¹² Enlightened Yemeni leaders have always understood that in a rugged, rural country where tribal authority has always been strong, a ruler must

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be willing to cede power in order to maintain it. This delicate balancing act stems from a contradictory reality that is essential to understanding Yemeni politics: while the idea of Yemen as a territorial entity is widespread, it has never been associated with a powerful, hierarchical state. As one long-time Yemen expert observed, "the idea of Yemen as a natural unit has been embedded in literature and local practice. Unified power has not."¹³ In a country of high mountains and vast deserts, where even today 70% of the

11 The Shafi'is are followers of the teachings of Imam Shafi'i, one of the four principle *madhhabs* or schools of interpretation of Sunni Islam. See Bernard Haykel, "Al-Shawkani and the Jurisprudential Unity of Yemen," *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 67 (1993), for an excellent example of how Yemen's most prominent jurist, Muhammad al-Shawkani, blended Shafi'i jurisprudence in his own legal rulings to make the reign of the four imams who appointed him lead jurist more palatable to their Shafi'i subjects.

12 "Yemeni President Wins Re-Election," *New York Times*, September 24, 2006.

13 Paul Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 1.

5 Stewart M. Patrick, "Are 'Ungoverned Spaces' a Threat?" Council on Foreign Relations, January 11, 2010.

6 This argument is made in great detail in Alistair Harris, "Exploiting Grievances: Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 2010.

7 For one typical example, see Brad Lendon, "Yemen Fertile Ground for Terror Groups," CNN, January 4, 2010.

population still lives outside of major urban centers, a strong, centralized state authority is viewed with extreme wariness and outright hostility when it intrudes in local affairs and runs roughshod over local customs.¹⁴

Historically, rulers who ignored this fact did so at their own peril. Yemeni resentment and insurgency in reaction to government intrusion has been especially virulent against foreign powers that interfered in Yemeni politics, particularly those colonial powers that sought to bring tribal regions under the dominion of the state. The British, for example, had little influence over the far-flung territories of Southern Arabia (their colony in the Yemeni south) for almost the entire duration of the colony. For close to 70 years, practically the only interaction between southern tribal leaders and the colonial administration was an annual visit to Aden to be given weapons and salaries for their fighters.¹⁵ It was only with the introduction of airpower and the ability to bomb rebellious villages from the safety of the skies that the British brought the most remote tribal territories under control.¹⁶

Foreign Muslim and secular powers fared no better than the English. Traditional songs about the suffering of Ottoman troops in Yemen are still sung in Turkey, and Egyptian Prime Minister Ali Sabri famously called Gamal Abdel Nasser's decision to send thousands of troops in support of the Arab nationalists who overthrew Crown Prince Muhammad al-Badr "Egypt's Vietnam."¹⁷ While the United States realistically has no other partner than President Salih, aid provided

without conditions risks destabilizing the situation if it emboldens the Salih government to ignore the legitimate political grievances of its rivals and disregard the delicate balancing act that has always been essential to Yemen's stability.

Yemen's Opposition: Political Narrative and Grievances, Not Jihadists

Yemen is awash in political opposition to President Salih and his regime. Some prominent members of the opposition, such as Tariq al-Fadhli, are former jihadists. To date, however, there is no evidence to support claims that veterans of the Soviet jihad are supporting AQAP en masse. An examination of the ideology and grievances of the major opposition groups shows few avenues of overlap with AQAP beyond hatred of the Salih regime.¹⁸

The Huthis

The initial drivers of the Huthi rebellion in the north stemmed from "Zaydi revivalists who were originally fighting to protest the dilution of Zaydi identity and influence."¹⁹ More recently, the conflict has become a violent insurgency fueled by the lack of development in Sa'da Province (where most Huthis live) and as a reaction to "outside" military incursions into Sa'da by the Yemeni military. While the animosity is high between the Huthis and the secular clique surrounding President Salih, a strategic alliance between the Shi'a Huthis and AQAP based on their mutual hatred for the regime is improbable, especially given that the Yemeni government has reportedly sent some "Salafists" north to fight the Huthis.²⁰ The strongly sectarian and vitriolic anti-Shi'a rhetoric that is an essential part of AQAP's ideology

makes an alliance based on "enemy of my enemy" logic unlikely.²¹

The Southern Movement

In the south, the prospects for an alliance with AQAP are similarly unpromising. The secessionist South Yemen Movement is composed of a diverse mix of opposition groups from a variety of different ideological stripes, making it an unlikely partner for AQAP. Furthermore, the South Yemen Movement's grievance narrative is one of dispossession, insufficient oil revenues, and political disenfranchisement;

"AQAP, however, has cleverly tried to latch onto southerners' anger with the Salih government in an effort to reorient them away from the project of creating an independent southern state and toward jihad and the establishment of an Islamic state in southern Yemen."

their proposed solution is secession and the recreation of an independent southern state. The most popular candidates for leadership roles (if the south were to become independent) are not jihadists, but prominent leaders of the former socialist government.²² The South Yemen Movement is clearly a parochial project motivated by local

14 "At a Glance: Yemen," UNICEF, available at www.unicef.org/infobycountry/yemen_statistics.html.

15 Dresch, pp. 9-10.

16 As one colonial official said, "Pacification has mainly been negotiated, backed up with retribution for the evildoer from the Royal Air Force in the air and predominantly Arab forces on the ground." See A.P. Cummings-Bruce, "The Emergence of Aden since 1956," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 49:3-4 (1962).

17 Tim Mackintosh-Smith recounted hearing a Turkish folksong describing the suffering of Ottoman troops in Yemen. See Tim Mackintosh-Smith, *Travels with a Tangerine: From Morocco to Turkey in the Footstep of Islam's Greatest Traveler* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2004).

18 The Salih government has also alleged that the Huthis, the southern movement and AQAP are all in league against the government. See *al-Thawra*, July 31, 2009.

19 Christopher Boucek, "War in Saada: From Local Insurrection to National Challenge," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 2010.

20 Laurent Bonnefoy, "Deconstructing Salafism in Yemen," *CTC Sentinel* 2:2 (2009). Also see Ghaith Abdul-Ahad's interview with Khaled Abdul Nabi, former founder of the Abyan-Aden Islamic Army, who said that he was released from prison by President Salih on condition that he would help the government to fight the Huthis and the southern movement: "Al-Qaida in Yemen: Poverty, Corruption, and an Army of Jihadis Willing to Fight," *Guardian*, August 22, 2010.

21 See issue 13 of *Sada al-Malahim* for the article by Abu Yahya al-Libi called, "We are not Houthis, nor are We like them," refuting Saudi allegations that AQAP was assisting the Huthis. In the second issue of *Inspire*, an "interview" with Shaykh Abu Sufyan, AQAP's vice *amir*, provided examples of much more virulent anti-Shi'a rhetoric: "The Shi'a are polytheists and therefore amongst the worst enemies of Islam. They speak in the names of Islam but against the Muslims of *ahl as-sunnah*."

A recent claim of responsibility (if verified) for two attacks against Huthis on November 25 and 27 calls the Huthis *rawafid* or "rejectionists" and describes them as "legitimate targets" for further attacks.

22 For an in-depth look at the southern movement and its leadership, see Stephen Day, "The Political Challenge of Yemen's Southern Movement," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2010.

grievances and does not fit into al-Qa`ida's narrative of global jihad. AQAP, however, has cleverly tried to latch onto southerners' anger with the Salih government in an effort to reorient them away from the project of creating an independent southern state and toward jihad and the establishment of an Islamic state in southern Yemen.²³ While it is not inconceivable that some tribes in the south might willingly look the other way or extend hospitality to

“While there certainly are a small number of Yemenis who are drawn to AQAP and lured by the prospect of doing battle against the West and its regional allies, it must be stressed that it is not AQAP’s grievance narrative that motivates the vast majority of Yemenis to fight the government.”

AQAP fighters and perhaps to Anwar al-`Awlaqi (whose relationship to AQAP's leadership is far from clear), nothing is surer to alienate the tribes of southern Yemen than civilian casualties at the hands of U.S.-trained and equipped northern troops and the sense that President Salih, their primary military rival, has access to an unlimited spigot of military aid at his disposal, provided by the United States.

The Way Forward

To date, AQAP and its affiliates have been diligent in attacking security forces and not Yemeni civilians. In fact, 64% of the attacks claimed by AQAP and its predecessor organizations from 1998-2008 have targeted security forces, government officials or utilities.²⁴ As

long as tensions remain high between the Salih government and disaffected individuals in regions such as Marib and al-Jawf, AQAP will be able to continue this strategy. Yet if the Salih government begins dialogue with local leaders and is willing to engage the leaders of the southern movement in political negotiations and make concessions on key issues, AQAP will find itself in an uncomfortable position. Although it cannot be known for certain, it is possible that at this point AQAP, as have so many al-Qa`ida affiliates, would begin to attack civilians and local leaders in an attempt to dissuade collaboration and dialogue with the government. Such a course could lead to the group's marginalization.

The security challenges in Yemen stem from a complex array of grievances that if they are to be resolved require Machiavellian levels of political engagement and negotiation by local leaders. This is a process that the jihadists—who are master propagandists—cannot succeed at because they do not have a political platform. Indeed, they have rejected the path of political compromise to take up arms and establish an Islamic state. They have only their own claims of righteousness and piety to legitimate the controversial attacks that they claim are essential to bring about this aspirational goal.²⁵ They will succeed only if their narrative is more credible than the Salih government's. Recently, this has not been too difficult a barrier to surpass. Even with all of the Salih government's shortcomings and widespread anti-American sentiment in Yemen, however, the entirety of the country is not an al-Qa`ida training camp. While there certainly are a small number of Yemenis who are drawn to AQAP and lured by the prospect of doing battle against the West and its regional allies, it must be stressed that it

is not AQAP's grievance narrative that motivates the vast majority of Yemenis to fight the government. Most Yemenis have taken up arms because of distinct political grievances and a perception that politics is a dead end.

There is little doubt that Washington's Yemen deliberations will result in some mixture of additional military aid and training, an escalation of drone activities, and some additional economic aid. To the greatest degree possible, the United States should provide, through appropriate channels, transparent proposals for economic development, specific and timely releases of the evidence of AQAP's plots against the United States, and engage the Yemeni public through editorials and press conferences explaining the rationale behind U.S. policy.²⁶

While drones will probably be brought to bear in some capacity, the open source reporting on the history of drone and missile strikes in Yemen paints a very mixed picture. The value of the successful strike that killed Abu Ali al-Harithi in 2002 was undermined by U.S. claims of responsibility, which eliminated any chance of plausible deniability for the government, thus causing President Salih enormous embarrassment. More recently, a missile strike in December 2009 reportedly caused significant civilian casualties and was widely criticized by human rights groups and Yemeni officials.²⁷ A subsequent missile strike in May 2010 killed a deputy provincial governor, again causing the Salih government significant difficulties.²⁸ Furthermore, it is local actors and networks outside of Sana`a that provide the intelligence essential for drone strikes to be successful. As long as AQAP is operating primarily in areas outside of government control, it is doubtful the Salih government will be able to provide this intelligence in any consistent fashion. Moreover,

Islamic Army,” “Al-Qa`ida,” “Al-Qa`ida in Yemen,” and “Sympathizers of Al-Qa`ida” using data from The Global Terrorism Database at the University of Maryland. An analysis of a second open source database, the WITS from the National Counterterrorism Center, shows a slightly different perspective: of 34 incidents committed by Sunni extremist groups from July 2007 until June 2010 in which there were victims, 41% were against civilians and 42% were against military and police targets. 25 Nelly Lahoud, “The Strengths and Weaknesses of Jihadist Ideology,” *CTC Sentinel* 3:10 (2010).

26 Gregory D. Johnsen has been particularly persuasive in arguing this last point. See Gregory D. Johnsen, “Yemen: Confronting Al-Qaeda, Preventing State Failure, testimony before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee,” January 20, 2010.

27 “Yemen: Cracking Under Pressure,” Amnesty International, 2010, pp. 31-32.

28 Greg Miller, Greg Jaffe, and Karen DeYoung, “U.S. Drones on the Hunt in Yemen,” *Washington Post*, November 7, 2010.

23 See “The Southern Issue: Secession or Unity is there another Option?” in issue 13 of *Sada al-Malahim*, in which the author presents jihad as the right path, not political participation in either the North or South “apostate” regimes.

24 This figure is based on an analysis of 17 terrorist attacks from 1998 until 2008 claimed by the “Adan-Abyan

local leaders will refrain from providing such intelligence if drone strikes are causing civilian casualties in their regions.²⁹

Finally, military aid and training, while essential, will undermine their own utility if they are the catalyst that convinces the Huthis and the leaders of the southern movement that they have more to gain by striking now rather than waiting until the military balance has turned decisively against them. This would risk sinking Yemen into a chaos worse than anything AQAP could hope to create on its own.

The strategy devised for Yemen must be one that keeps only a light U.S. footprint in the country and exploits the contradictions and weaknesses inherent in al-Qa`ida's ideology, which offers no political solutions in a country swimming in political problems. The greatest current danger is that through an overly heavy intervention in Yemeni affairs, the United States provides AQAP a perfect propaganda tool to point to the hand of the United States as the only force sustaining the Salih government and further exploit the grievances of the wide ranging political opposition to its own ends. Pressure on the Salih government to engage with its political rivals and an understanding that maintaining power in Yemen often requires ceding it to local leaders is essential to minimize the threat posed by AQAP to both the United States and Yemen.

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The Role of Non-Violent Islamists in Europe

By Lorenzo Vidino

DURING THE LAST few years, European authorities have invested significant resources in understanding the radicalization patterns that have led scores of European Muslims to engage in terrorist activities. One particularly thorny issue has been the role of non-violent Islamists in the process. Offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood, Jamaat-i-Islami, Milli Görüs, so-called non-jihadist/political Salafists, and other Islamist movements have in fact established an extensive presence in most European countries. Although there are important differences in the strain of Islamism embraced by these groups, it is fair to say that while they support acts of violence in regions where they believe Muslims are under attack, they all oppose attacks in Europe of the kind plotted by al-Qa`ida and affiliated networks. The two questions debated by European scholars and policymakers have been: what is the role of non-violent Islamists in the radicalization process? Could they become government partners in the fight against violent radicalization?

The Debate Over Non-Violent Islamists

As for the first question, one strand of thinking considers non-violent Islamist groups as "conveyor belts" for further radicalization. This is the view of former British Home Secretary Jacqui Smith, who has stated that non-violent Islamists "may not explicitly promote violence, but they can create a climate of fear and distrust where violence becomes more likely."¹ Critics challenge this attitude by arguing that there is "no empirical evidence of a causal link between extremism and violent extremism."² The image of a "slippery slope from political mobilisation to anger and, finally, to violent extremism and terrorism" is, according to some, flawed and not supported by facts.³

1 Alan Travis, "Time to Tackle the Non-Violent Extremists, Says Smith," *Guardian*, December 11, 2008.

2 Rachel Briggs, "Community Engagement for Counter-Terrorism: Lessons from the United Kingdom," *International Affairs* 86:4 (2010).

3 Rachel Briggs, Catherine Fieschi, and Hannah Lownsbrough, "Bringing It Home: Community-Based Ap-

proaches to Counter-Terrorism," Demos, 2006.

Many of those who hold this view also argue that any government would be foolish in not harnessing the enormous potential that a partnership with non-violent Islamists holds. While some of their views might be offensive, they possess a unique legitimacy and street credibility more amenable to young Muslims close to jihadist views. In fact, they "have a much deeper and nuanced understanding of the 'ecology' in which radical and violent movements operate" than Muslim organizations generally considered more "moderate."⁴ According to this argument, governments should empower the work of these groups, which constitute the ultimate bulwarks against violent radicalization.

One of the most vocal proponents of this view is Robert Lambert, the former head of the Muslim Contact Unit (MCU), the section of the London Metropolitan Police devoted to engaging the city's Muslim community. Lambert argues that the "ideal yes-saying" Muslim leaders lack legitimacy in their communities and have no knowledge of radicalization. He advocates "police negotiation leading to partnership with Muslim groups conventionally deemed to be subversive to democracy."⁵ Lambert uses as example of this potential STREET (Strategy to Re-Empower and Educate Teenagers), a counter-radicalization program run by strict Salafists in the Brixton area of London. According to Lambert, STREET, thanks to its combination of "street skills and religious integrity," has been particularly successful in contrasting the recruitment efforts of al-Qa`ida-linked preachers in the area.⁶

Danish security services share this analysis, arguing that in some cases "it is precisely these individuals who have the best chance of influencing the attitudes of the young people who are in a process of radicalisation, in a non-

proaches to Counter-Terrorism," Demos, 2006.

4 Peter Mandaville, "Engaging Islamists in the West," *CTC Sentinel* 1:7 (2008).

5 Personal interview, Robert Lambert, London, December 2008; Robert Lambert, "Empowering Salafis and Islamists Against Al-Qaeda: A London Counterterrorism Case Study," *Political Science & Politics* 41:1 (2008).

6 Jonathan Githens-Mazer and Robert Lambert, "Why Conventional Wisdom on Radicalisation Fails: The Persistence of a Failed Discourse," *International Affairs* 86:4 (2010).

violent direction.”⁷ Lambert and the Danish security services embrace the view that, rather than conveyor belts, non-violent Islamists act as “firewalls.” An individual who embraces their views might be considered a “radical,” in some cases espousing opinions that are repugnant to the majority, but the firewall represented by non-violent Islamists prevents that person from becoming a violent radical.

Critics argue that while it might be true that most non-violent Islamists do not become violent radicals, it is unquestionable that some do. Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who tried to detonate a bomb on an airplane over the United States on Christmas Day in 2009, and Cüneyt Ciftci, Germany’s first suicide bomber, are just the latest examples of militants whose radicalization path started with non-violent Islamist groups before progressing further. The firewall effect of these groups is, according to critics, only occasional and there is no empirical evidence to support the view that it is a constant. To the contrary, according to the Quilliam Foundation, non-violent Islamist groups “advocate separatist, confrontational ideas that, followed to their logical conclusion, lead to violence. At the very least, the rhetoric of radicals provides the mood music to which suicide bombers dance.”⁸

Furthermore, argue some, even assuming non-violent Islamists can indeed sway some individuals from becoming violent radicals, the long-term implications on social cohesion and integration of any partnership the government might enter with them would greatly offset the yet-to-be-proven, short-term benefits in the security field. This position has been repeatedly championed, among others, by the German security services. In its annual report, the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV) has stated that “‘legalistic’ Islamist groups represent an especial threat to the internal cohesion of our society.”⁹ The BfV admits that

non-violent Islamist groups “do not carry out recruitment activities for the purpose of the violent ‘Holy War’ (Jihad),” and that, to the contrary,

they might rather claim to immunise young Muslims against jihadist indoctrination by presenting to them an alternative offer of identification...However, one has to critically ask whether their activities that are strongly directed at preserving an “Islamic identity” intensify disintegration and contribute to the development of Islamist parallel societies.¹⁰

Moreover, they argue, embracing the conveyor belt theory, there “is the risk that such milieus could also form the breeding ground for further radicalization.”¹¹

Many security officials in various European countries similarly accept the view that identifying the enemy only in violent groups is a self-deceiving act. Alain Grignard, the deputy head of the Belgian police’s counterterrorism unit and a professor of Islamic studies at Brussels Free University, calls al-Qa`ida an “epiphenomenon,” the most visible aspect of a much larger threat that is political Islam.¹² Alain Chouet, the former head of France’s counterintelligence service, the DGSE, agrees with Grignard and believes that

Al-Qaeda is only a brief episode and an expedient instrument in the century-old existence of the Muslim Brotherhood. The true danger is in the expansion of the Brotherhood, an increase in its audience. The wolf knows how to disguise itself as a sheep.¹³

Chouet’s comparison of the Muslim Brotherhood to a wolf in sheep’s clothing is echoed by many security experts who fear that non-violent

Islamists are attempting to benefit from what in social movement theory is known as positive radical flank effect.¹⁴ According to the theory, more moderate wings of a political movement improve their bargaining position when a more radical fringe emerges. Applied to non-violent Islamist groups, the positive radical flank effect would explain why the emergence of al-Qa`ida and other jihadist groups has led European governments to see non-violent Islamists more benignly and even to flirt with the idea of establishing forms of partnership. The emergence of a severe and prolonged terrorist threat, argue people such as Chouet, has led European governments to lower the bar of what is acceptable and endorse organizations holding highly controversial and anti-democratic views as long as they oppose violence in the Old Continent.

The French Example

Chouet’s warning is echoed by unlikely supporters of this view: social workers from France, the country that first experimented with informal partnerships with non-violent Islamist groups and where their long-term impact is easier to detect. In the early 1990s, in fact, French authorities became concerned by the surge of criminal activities, unemployment and a more general sense of disenfranchisement that pervaded the *banlieues*, the housing projects that surround most French cities. In response, French authorities began empowering local Muslim Brotherhood-linked organizations that already engaged in grassroots initiatives to sway young Muslims from crime and drugs.¹⁵ The perception that non-violent Islamist groups could succeed where the state had failed led many French policymakers, particularly at the local level, to provide financial support to them.¹⁶ This security-based partnership

7 “A Common and Safe Future: Proposal for an Action Plan to Prevent Extremist Views and Radicalisation among Young People,” Danish Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, June 2008.

8 This quote is drawn from the Quilliam Foundation’s launch publication in April 2008.

9 Annual report of the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, 2005, p. 190.

10 “Integration as a Means to Prevent Extremism and Terrorism: Typology of Islamist Radicalisation and Recruitment,” German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, January 2007, p. 5.

11 Annual report of the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, 2005, p. 190.

12 Sylvain Besson, *La Conquête de l’Occident* (Paris: Seuil, 2005), p. 40.

13 Caroline Fourest, *Brother Tariq: The Doublespeak of Tariq Ramadan* (New York: Encounter, 2008), p. 103.

14 See, for example, Herbert H. Haines, “Black Radicalization and the Funding of Civil Rights: 1957-1970,” in Doug McAdam and David A. Snow, *Social Movements* (Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company, 1997), pp. 440-441.

15 Frank Peter, “Leading the Community of the Middle Way: A Study of the Muslim Field in France,” *The Muslim World* 96:4 (2006).

16 Dounia Bouzar, *L’Islam des Banlieues: Les Prédicateurs Musulmans: Nouveaux Travailleurs Sociaux?* (Paris: Syros la Découverte, 2001); Marie-France Etchegoin and Serge Raffy, “La Vérité sur l’Islam en France,” *Le Nouvel Observateur*, February 2, 2006; Personal interview, French

was widely implemented, albeit never as a formal policy and not across the board, and received a boost after the September 11 attacks on the United States.¹⁷ If during the 1990s some French policymakers envisioned non-violent Islamists as “social pacificators” keeping order inside the *banlieues*, the emergence of terrorism and radicalization as state priorities added a new responsibility, as non-violent Islamists were seen as a possible antidote to the jihadists.¹⁸

Yet 15 years later the results have left many skeptical. They point to the fact that crime and the sense of disenfranchisement that plagued the *banlieues* have not been reduced by the activities of non-violent Islamist groups. Most importantly, others point at the negative social developments that their influence has brought. One particularly loud voice has been that of the women’s association Ni Putes Ni Soumises, a feminist group traditionally linked to the French Left. “In the 1980s [in the *banlieues*], there were mixed marriages and sexuality was treated in far less intolerant terms,” recounted a Ni Putes Ni Soumises militant. As Brotherhood organizations began their government-subsidized activities, she argued, the social climate changed significantly: “Today, there is nothing left in these neighborhoods: no sense of life, no love, nothing but prohibition.”¹⁹

A similar view is held by Father Christian Delorme, the liaison to the Muslim community for the diocese of Lyon. Since the 1980s, Father Delorme had been active in organizing protests and popular marches against the discrimination North Africans faced in France and was among the most vocal backers of government support for the activities of Islamic organizations in the *banlieues*, arguing that more piety would have a beneficial effect.²⁰ By the end of

the 1990s, however, Father Delorme became convinced that not all Muslim organizations were the same. “There is an Islam of the families, which is for the most part an Islam of hospitality and piety,” argued the clergyman in a 2001 interview with *Le Monde*, stating that the majority of French Islam is as such, “neither static nor dominating.”²¹

“What I criticize,” continued Father Delorme, who has worked for decades in Lyon’s most troubled neighborhoods,

is the work of hardening of the religious identity operated by some organizations that have an interest in discrediting such popular Islam; I am thinking in particular at the current of the Muslim Brothers...I came to understand that they were dangerous when I saw that they cut the ties between the young and their families, explaining that their parents did not practice the true Islam, that they were not on the right path. I also understood that they wormed their way into institutions, taking advantage of secularism, using the rhetoric of secularism, but using it only as a means; for basically they were against integration, and the identity they sought was that of a community of Muslims, living autonomously in the Republic, like a potent countervailing power.²²

No Conclusive Evidence

Any decision on the opportunity to partner with non-violent Islamists would ideally be based on an empirical assessment of their role in both the radicalization and counter-radicalization process. Yet, in reality, there is little evidence to conclusively back either the conveyor belt or the firewall argument. There is substantial anecdotal evidence supporting both positions simultaneously, but no systematic, comprehensive studies that can definitively prove either. This deficiency is due to a variety of factors, from an only recently reversed lack of interest from the research community to problems in obtaining access to

substantial bodies of information that would provide a comprehensive glimpse into a person’s path to radicalization. Moreover, while it might be relatively easy to determine cases in which non-violent Islamists acted as firewalls, assessing their role as conveyor belts is significantly more challenging. While it might be true that they provide the “mood music to which suicide bombers dance” and that they have made mainstream a narrative over which violent groups build their recruiting efforts, empirically proving such an intangible role is almost impossible.

Given this lack of empirical evidence, intuitively it can be argued that in some cases non-violent Islamist groups act as firewalls while in others as conveyor belts. Radicalization is a highly individualized and unpredictable journey. Many who join non-violent Islamist networks will never make the leap to jihadist networks and, to the contrary, will actively challenge their influence. Yet many cases have shown that others will make the leap. In substance, the dearth of evidence on the radicalization process and its lack of linearity makes conclusive assessments on the role of non-violent Islamists almost impossible. Furthermore, some of the potentially negative implications of partnering with non-violent Islamists are not strictly security-related, but rather involve broader issues of integration and social cohesion with which most European governments are still grappling. As a consequence, positions and policies on the issue swing almost erratically.

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government official, Paris, February 2007; Personal interview, French government official, Lyon, June 2006.

17 Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 273-274.

18 Vincent Geisser and Aziz Zemouri, *Marianne et Al-lab: Les Politiques Français face à la “Question Musulmane”* (Paris: La Découverte, 2007), p. 117; Nicolas Sarkozy, *La République, les Religions, l’Espérance* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2004), p. 100.

19 Fourest, p. 191.

20 “Il Faut Reconnaître la Sur-Délinquance des Jeunes

Issus de l’Immigration,” *Le Monde*, December 4, 2001.

21 Philippe Bernard and Xavier Ternisien, “Il Faut Reconnaître la Sur-Délinquance des Jeunes Issus de l’Immigration,” *Le Monde*, December 4, 2001.

22 Fourest, p. 191.

The Evolution of Iran's Special Groups in Iraq

By Michael Knights

FOLLOWING IRAN'S APPARENT role in kick-starting the long-delayed formation of a government in Baghdad, Tehran is seen by many as the most influential external power in Iraq.¹ While this may or may not be true, it is clear that Iran has a proven ability to commission violence inside Iraq.² Yet while the covert programs run by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Qods Force is a source of influence in Iraq, paramilitary operations come at a cost. The militarization of Iranian influence is often counterproductive in Iraq, reinforcing Iraqis' generally negative attitudes toward Iran.³ Tehran's concern about negative Iraqi perceptions of its paramilitary proxies has influenced the evolution of Iranian support to the so-called "Special Groups" of militant Shi'a diehards in Iraq.

Iranian Support to "Special Groups"

As the unclassified Iraqi government Harmony records collated by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point illustrate, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been in the business of sponsoring Iraqi paramilitary proxies for 30 years, practically the government's entire existence.⁴ In some cases, the same Iraqi individuals run like a thread throughout the entire story, from Islamic terrorists, to exiled anti-Saddam guerrillas, to anti-American Special Group fighters in post-Ba'athist Iraq.⁵ Many of the historical patterns of Iranian support to Iraqi proxies hold true today.

Although paramilitary action is just one strand of Iranian influence-building in Iraq, it plays a particularly important role in Iran's pursuit of security-related objectives. Seeking to replicate the model used by Lebanon's Hizb Allah, the Special Groups are considered a vanguard that will leverage its record of resistance against the United States after major U.S. forces depart Iraq in December 2011. As well as seeking to hasten the U.S. withdrawal, the Special Groups demonstrate Iran's ability to destabilize Iraq and may be used to pressure a future government into reducing the long-term presence of U.S. forces in the country. More broadly, the Special Groups represent a flexible tool that might be used to aid Iran's effort to prevent nationalist and former Ba'athists from rising to the top of Iraqi politics and to maintain leverage over a new Shi'a-led government.

According to pre-2003 Iraqi government reporting on Iranian proxy operations, the IRGC Qods Force had already anticipated the need to split its support between groups that would "work openly" and others that would "work secretly" in a post-invasion Iraq.⁶ Ba'athist reporting appears to have been well-sourced and accurate in many respects: they correctly anticipated Iran's ability to support public organizations such as the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) and the paramilitary Badr Organization, while also backing covert Special Groups. A consistent feature of Iran's patronage has been careful efforts to spread Tehran's bets across many different horses.

The Politics of Special Group Operations

The armed factions that make up the Special Groups have passed through significant changes in the last two years, and they continue to evolve. The government security offensives of spring 2008 caused considerable damage to Iranian-backed networks, and many Special Group operators fled to sanctuaries in Iran. Since the summer of 2009, these groups have been allowed breathing space to recover and begin to reestablish their presence in Iraq.

There are many reasons why recovery has been possible. In June 2009, the U.S.-Iraq security agreement ended the ability of U.S. forces to operate unilaterally in Iraq's cities, where much of the fight against the Special Groups has been conducted. The U.S. military thereafter required an Iraqi warrant and Iraqi military cooperation to undertake raids against the Special Groups. In the extended lead-up to Iraq's March 2010 elections, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki sought to win favor with other Shi'a factions by using his direct operational control of Iraq's Counterterrorism Command to place a virtual embargo on such raids. Lacking the judicial evidence to hold Special Group detainees transferred to the Iraqi government, and facing pressure from Shi'a groups, the government began to release Special Group prisoners as soon as they were transferred to Iraqi custody by the United States.⁷

The military cells supported by Iran are spread across the legal spectrum, from completely covert organizations to political parties with deniable connections to the IRGC Qods Force. They include:

Kataib Hizb Allah

Kataib Hizb Allah (KH) was formed in early 2007 as a vehicle through which the IRGC Qods Force could deploy its most experienced operators and its most sensitive equipment.⁸ Much can be gleaned from the positioning of Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis (whose real name is Jamal al-Ibrahimi) as the leader of KH. Born in Basra, al-Muhandis is an adviser to IRGC Qods Force commander Qasem Soleimani. The life history of al-Muhandis describes the arc of Iranian support for Iraqi Shi'a proxies, with al-Muhandis starting as an exiled member of the outlawed Da'wa Party, working with the IRGC Qods Force to undertake

1 A sober analysis of the situation is Martin Chulov, "Iran Brokers Behind-the-Scenes Deal for Pro-Tehran Government in Iraq," *Guardian*, October 17, 2010.

2 Probably the best primer on this issue is Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, *Iranian Strategy in Iraq: Politics and 'Other Means'* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2008).

3 Good polling data is available to support the strong anecdotal and media evidence available on this issue to Iraq watchers. See David Pollock and Ahmed Ali, "Iran Gets Negative Reviews in Iraq, Even from Shiites," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, May 4, 2010.

4 See Annex B of Felter and Fishman, which contains Ba'ath-era intelligence documents.

5 "Treasury Designates Individual, Entity Posing Threat to Stability in Iraq," U.S. Treasury Department, July 2, 2009.

6 "Study About the Disloyal Badr Corps 9," Iraqi General Security Office, January 2002, translated as part of the Harmony records, reference number ISGQ-2005-00038283, p. 71. Available in Felter and Fishman, p. 324.

7 Personal interview, U.S. intelligence analyst, Washington, D.C., August 4, 2010. In private conversations, U.S. intelligence personnel are candid about the limitations that now face any U.S.-initiated actions against Special Group operators.

8 KH has been closely associated with the fielding of the RPG-29 and with sensitive communications security equipment. KH was credited with having accessed an encrypted datalink feed from a U.S. Predator unmanned aerial vehicle. For details, see Michael Hoffman, John Reed and Joe Gould, "Army: Working to Encrypt UAV Video Feeds," *Army Times*, December 21, 2009.

terrorist operations against the Kuwaiti royal family and the U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait in the early 1980s.⁹ Al-Muhandis then joined the Badr movement while living in Iran in 1985, rising to become one of the Iraqi deputy commanders of Badr by 2001.¹⁰ He is a strategist with extensive experience dealing directly with the most senior Iraqi politicians; indeed, al-Muhandis was, until the March 2010 elections, an elected member of parliament, albeit spending most of his time in Iran.¹¹ Under al-Muhandis, KH has developed as a compact movement of less than 400 personnel that is firmly under IRGC Qods Force control and maintains relatively good operational security.¹²

Asaib Ahl al-Haq

Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) emerged between 2006 and 2008 as part of an effort by the IRGC Qods Force to create a popular organization similar to Lebanese Hizb Allah that would be easier to shape than Moqtada al-Sadr's uncontrollable Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) movement.¹³ AAH was built around one of al-Sadr's key rivals, a protégé of al-Sadr's father called Qais al-Khazali who had consistently opposed al-Sadr's cease-fire agreements with the U.S. and Iraqi militaries. After AAH undertook the kidnap and murder of five U.S. soldiers on January 20, 2007, al-Khazali was captured by coalition forces alongside his brother Laith Khazali and Lebanese Hizb Allah operative Ali Musa

Daqduq in Basra on March 20, 2007.¹⁴ In time, al-Khazali was transferred to Iraqi custody and then released in exchange for kidnapped Briton Peter Moore on January 5, 2010.¹⁵ Although far less senior in the IRGC Qods Force hierarchy than al-Muhandis and 20 years his junior, Qais al-Khazali could become a significant political force in mainstream politics and is being courted by both al-Maliki and al-Sadr precisely because he has the capability to draw away a portion of Moqtada's supporters if he so chooses.

During al-Khazali's absence in prison, AAH played a delicate game, balancing the need to negotiate for the release of detainees against the desire of many AAH members to continue attacking U.S. forces. Like its predecessor, Jaysh al-Mahdi, AAH is becoming a catch-all for a wide range of militants who seek to engage in violence for a host of ideological, sectarian or purely commercial motives.¹⁶ Notorious Special Group commanders such as Sadrists breakaway Abu Mustapha al-Sheibani (whose real name is Hamid Thajeel al-Sheibani) and infamous Shi'a warlord Abu Deraa (whose real name is Ismail al-Lami) are reported to be returning from Iran to join AAH.¹⁷

Promised Day Brigades

The Promised Day Brigades (PDB) are the least understood of the major Iranian-influenced Shi'a militant groups. In theory, PDB is a Shi'a nationalist militia that provides Moqtada al-Sadr's militant followers a way to justify staying within his organization while reserving the theoretical right to fight U.S. forces. In practice, many purported members of PDB appear to collaborate with KH and AAH organizers to participate in small numbers of attacks on U.S. forces.¹⁸

Badr Organization

Although the Badr Organization is a major political organization with seats in the new parliament, it also arguably plays a significant role in facilitating Special Group operations in Iraq. When it was formed in the early 1980s, the Badr movement was, in effect, the first Special Group.¹⁹ A proportion of senior Special Group commanders such as Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis are Badr personnel, with long-standing ties to current Badr leader Hadi al-Amiri. After 2003, Badr became the part of the IRGC Qods Force that was selected to "work openly" within the new Iraq. Badr inserted hundreds of its Iranian-trained operatives into the state security organs (notably the Ministry of Interior intelligence structure and key special forces and Iraqi Army units). As a result, the Special Groups have regularly received tip-offs and targeting guidance from their "fellow travelers" in the Badr movement.²⁰

Iran's Changed Approach

The period since 2003 has witnessed a balance of Iranian successes and failures in its proxy operations in Iraq. On the one hand, Iran has kept up military pressure on U.S. forces in Iraq and has demonstrated its ability to destabilize key areas. On the other hand, Iranian paramilitary involvement in Iraq is widely resented by Iraqis and has contributed to the downturn in the political fortunes of pro-Iranian parties such as the ISCI, driving other Shi'a blocs (such as al-Maliki's Da'wa Party) to distance themselves from Iran.

This trend was most clear in the early months of 2007 when Iran's political allies in Iraq issued a demarche to the IRGC Qods Force to scale back its support of Iraqi militias. After Lebanese Hizb Allah's successful "summer war" against Israel in July 2006, the IRGC Qods Force sought to replicate this victory in Iraq, opening the floodgates to provide advanced Explosively-Formed Projectile (EFP) munitions and other weapons to a wide range of Shi'a Islamist factions. The

9 "Treasury Designates Individual, Entity Posing Threat to Stability in Iraq"; "Study about the Disloyal Badr Corps 9," p. 71.

10 Ibid.

11 See the brief article recounting a meeting with al-Muhandis by Thomas Strouse, "Kata'ib Hezbollah and the Intricate Web of Iranian Military Involvement in Iraq," *Terrorism Monitor* 8:9 (2010).

12 Personal interview, U.S. intelligence analyst, Baghdad, July 3, 2010. Also see "ISF Campaigns Against Kata'ib Hezbollah Weapons Smuggling, Rocket-Attack Network Along Iraq-Iran Border," press release, United States Forces - Iraq, February 12, 2010.

13 For a good early study on AAH, see Marisa Cochrane Sullivan, "Asaib Ahl al Haq and the Special Groups," *Institute for the Study of War*, January 13, 2009. Jaysh al-Mahdi was uncontrollable—to both Moqtada al-Sadr and Iran—because it grew so rapidly and under such chaotic conditions in post-Saddam Iraq. Unlike the Badr Corps, an organization designed by the IRGC Qods Force over a period of years, JAM quickly incorporated criminal elements and untrained civilians into a sprawling and loosely-structured movement in a number of months.

14 U.S. Brigadier General Kevin Bergner, "Press Briefing, July 2," Multinational Force-Iraq, July 2, 2007.

15 Ned Parker and Saad Fakhrideen, "Iraq Frees Shiite Militant in Exchange for Briton, Followers Say," *Los Angeles Times*, January 6, 2010.

16 Personal interview, U.S. intelligence analyst, Baghdad, July 3, 2010.

17 Ma'ad Fayad, "Iraq: Notorious Shiite Warlord Returns to Baghdad," *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, August 18, 2010; "Iraq: Return of Sheibani's Killer Squads," *United Press International*, September 30, 2010.

18 Personal interview, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency analyst, Washington, D.C., February 2010; Bill Roggio, "Iranian-Backed Shia Terror Group Remains a Threat

in Iraq: General Odierno," *The Long War Journal*, July 13, 2010.

19 "Study about the Disloyal Badr Corps 9," pp. 255-330.

20 Since 2003, the author has seen literally dozens of U.S. and British intelligence documents highlighting the Badr role in paramilitary operations in Iraq.

result was internecine assassinations of two provincial governors and two provincial police chiefs in the latter half of 2006, all Shi'a-on-Shi'a political killings using EFPs. The IRGC resolved to narrow its support for groups to more trusted entities after rival Shi'a groups began fighting in the shrine city of Karbala in late August 2007, which was the final straw for Iraq's Shi'a political and religious leaders.²¹

The re-think of Iranian support to Iraqi militants has had far-reaching effects. The development of alternatives to the out-of-control Jaysh al-Mahdi is one reason why new formations such as KH and AAH were developed. The need to place Iraqis in leadership roles is another factor, reflecting arrests of IRGC personnel in Iraq in 2005-2007, which showed that it was too risky to deploy significant numbers of Iranian IRGC personnel or even Lebanese Hizb Allah operatives to Iraq.²² According to U.S. and Iraqi security force interviewees, the IRGC Qods Force centralized its resupply operations to KH and AAH cells, adding a system of accounting for Iranian-supplied weapons. This meant moving from the "pull" system—where Iraqis came to ask a cell leader for weapons—to a more secure and selective "push" system, where the cell leader would allocate weapons to well-paid and experienced fighters who were known to be reliable. Each major arms cache now has a "hide custodian" who signs out weapons such as EFPs and is responsible for their proper use against U.S. forces and the minimization of Iraqi casualties. Money continues to be provided in significant volumes, allowing cells to be paid between \$4,000 and \$13,000 per rocket or roadside bomb attack, depending on the circumstances.²³ Communications

security and operational security are aided by the compact size of cells.

A constant feature of Iran's policy for more than 20 years has been the importance of uninterrupted cross-border resupply for Iran's proxies in Iraq. The broad outlines of cross-border movement have not changed greatly from the early 1990s in many places. The general principle is that personnel and equipment move through official points of entry (POE) whenever

“The most visible symbol of Iran’s support is the 20-30 rocket attacks launched against U.S. bases each month in Iraq, almost all of which involve entire rocket/mortar systems or components (such as fuel packs) identified as Iranian-produced by U.S. weapons intelligence specialists.”

possible. For personnel, this is almost always possible due to the primitiveness of Iraq's customs and immigration services and due to the combined effects of corruption and professionally-forged documentation. Until the introduction of U.S.-provided vehicle scanning equipment, the Special Groups could bring weapons and explosives into Iraq through the POE on flatbed trucks, concealed beneath herds of sheep or bags of cement.²⁴ Even now, corruption and the slow degradation of the equipment make it possible to use border crossings to bring specialized equipment such as the milled copper cones for EFP munitions into the country.

The use of professional smugglers is an age-old Iranian practice, involving cross-border tribes and corrupt border guards. Smuggling boats make daylight transits of the Hawr al-Howeiza, marshes in Maysan Province, with rockets and other equipment concealed under tarpaulins covered with fishing gear and fresh fish.²⁵ On land, the key routes continue to be the Badra area of Wasit Province, the northern Maysan border at multiple points, and eastern Basra (south of Majnoon and north of Shalamcheh).²⁶ Iran's armed forces support border crossings with a number of means, including use of its own unmanned aerial vehicles, helicopters, long-range optics, signals intelligence and intimidation firing to discourage Iraqi border guard patrolling.²⁷

Operations and Tactics

Iran's support to Special Groups appears to be largely focused on anti-U.S. resistance operations as opposed to other types of sectarian and factional violence. The most visible symbol of Iran's support is the 20-30 rocket attacks launched against U.S. bases each month in Iraq, almost all of which involve entire rocket/mortar systems or components (such as fuel packs) identified as Iranian-produced by U.S. weapons intelligence specialists.²⁸ The IRGC has been supporting such attacks since the early 1980s, when Badr was supplied with rockets to use in Iraq during and after the Iran-Iraq War. Although local sourcing of rockets is undertaken whenever possible, most rocket artillery rounds in Iraq are too degraded to function properly. This has led Iran to smuggle large numbers of

21 Greg Hoadley, "Sadrist Fume After Karbala Clashes: At Least 50 Dead in Fighting; Millions of Pilgrims Flee," Iraq Slogger, August 28, 2008. The added detail on Iraqi-Iranian discussions is based on personal interviews. See personal interview, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency analyst, Washington, D.C., February 2010.

22 The most notable instance was the detention of five Iranian intelligence personnel in Arbil. See James Glanz, "GI's in Iraq Raid Iranians' Offices," *New York Times*, January 12, 2007.

23 This section reflects interview material gathered by the author from a range of Iraqi security force intelligence and operational personnel in Iraq during visits in 2008, 2009 and 2010. Also see personal interview, U.S.

Central Intelligence Agency analyst, Washington, D.C., February 2010.

24 Personal interview, U.S. intelligence analyst, date and location withheld. The author also has unclassified documentary analyses of smuggling tactics produced by coalition intelligence officers.

25 Ibid. The author also has numerous photographic and map references developed by U.S. and Iraqi security forces that show exact crossing routes and identify cache sites and "hide custodians."

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 The Iranian government does not appear to be unduly concerned about plausible deniability, deploying new Iranian-produced "signature" weapons across Iraq. The U.S. government has released many photographic slideshows of newly-produced weapons systems in Iraq that are known to be manufactured by Iran. See the previously referenced briefing slides from Brig. Gen. Kevin Bergner for one example. The author has many weapons intelligence images that have not been released, including images from caches that were kept under surveillance after having been observed entering Iraq from Iran via boat.

107mm Hesab and 122mm Grad rockets into Iraq, as well as some larger 240mm Fajr rockets.²⁹ Although the mechanical reliability of firing switches (usually mechanical timers) is low—with up to half of each planned salvo often failing to fire—reduced U.S. air cover plus less effective Iraqi ground patrolling are allowing greater numbers of indirect fire attacks on U.S. bases.³⁰

The sophistication of indirect fire attacks is also increasing. In Baghdad and other cities, Special Groups tend to make greater use of 60mm and 81mm mortars to precisely target small U.S. Joint Security Stations.³¹ Banks of Improvised Rocket-Assisted Mortars (IRAM) have been used to great effect against urban U.S. bases in Baghdad and Amara.³² Efforts have also been made to increase the effectiveness of rocket attacks by launching horizontally at close range from within parked vehicles, launching at shallow angles to reduce warning and prevent interception by close-in weapons systems, or by overwhelming defenses with salvos of 16-20 truck-launched rockets.³³ Although indirect fire attacks are largely a harassment weapon, they have caused five fatalities to U.S. personnel and contractors in the last year.³⁴

The other visible sign of Special Group activity are roadside bombs. At present, these are almost entirely targeted on U.S. military vehicles plus the distinctive personal security detail vehicles that service U.S. reconstruction officials (which carry electronic countermeasures not seen on other vehicles). As a signature weapon

for Iranian-backed groups, EFPs are employed carefully to reduce Iraqi casualties. Due to this restriction plus the reduced number of U.S. targets on Iraq's roads, the incidence of EFP use has dropped from around 60 per month at the height of the "surge" in 2007 to an average of 17 per month in the first nine months of 2010.³⁵ To access U.S. targets, EFP cells have activated in areas where they were previously rarely encountered such as in Abu Ghurayb, Khalis and Muqyadiyya (in Diyala Province), and Kirkuk.³⁶

Per incident lethality has declined significantly since 2008 due to U.S. countermeasures and less effective weapons assembly and emplacement capabilities. Sporadic shortfalls in EFP components are apparent in the varying sophistication and composition of devices. Iranian-made C4, identifiable through chemical analysis, is less frequently used in EFPs today; more often the main charge is composed of five to 40 pounds of unidentified bulk explosive.³⁷ The EFP "liners" (the metal cone used to form the penetrator) come in up to a dozen sizes, with diameters between 2.75 inches and 16 inches.³⁸ The liners are largely better-quality copper cones, although some steel liners are used and some multiple-array devices have included a mix of copper and steel liners.³⁹

Despite the downscaling of EFP operations, the "engineer" cells capable of assembling EFPs and mounting such attacks continue to show signs of adaptation. Cells in Basra, Baghdad and along the main Supply Route Tampa South (between Baghdad and the Kuwaiti border) switch attack sites to match the movement patterns of U.S. units. The cells attempt to overcome U.S. countermeasures by offsetting the aiming points for devices (to take into account the "rhino" booms on U.S. vehicles), angling devices upwards to strike windows, and elevating devices

up lampposts and within T-walls or abandoned checkpoints to avoid the booms.⁴⁰ Cells also show adaptability in their combination of EFP elements (such as passive infrared firing switches) with claymore-style direction fragmentation charges.⁴¹ Large-caliber "daisy-chained" artillery shells (122mm to 155mm) are also periodically used to target U.S. vehicles. The highest quality Special Group bomb-maker cells active in Iraq appear to be based in northern Baghdad, Basra and in the Suq ash Shuyukh area, a marshland market town east of Nasiriyya that was a Badr stronghold throughout the Saddam era and a notorious den of thieves for hundreds of years before then.⁴²

A final and even murkier aspect of the Special Groups is their involvement with the deliberate killings of Iraqis. In the past, this aspect of Special Group activity has brought significant criticism onto Iran and its proxies. Although some Iraqis are killed in Special Group operations (as unintended civilian deaths in rocket or roadside bombing attacks or Iraqi Army deaths when joint U.S.-Iraqi patrols are bombed), deliberate targeting of Iraqis appears to be rare and selective. Evidence from arms caches suggests that Iranian-backed groups that stockpile EFP components and other Iranian signature weapons (240mm rockets, for instance) also maintain stocks of silenced pistols and under-vehicle magnetic IEDs ("sticky bombs").⁴³ These assassination tools suggest that some "direct action" is still undertaken against Iraqis to serve the political agenda of Iranian proxies or Iran's direct interests, or that such action could be undertaken again in the future.

29 This data is drawn from Olive Group intelligence reports gathered between 2006-2010.

30 This data is drawn from Olive Group Iraq Monthly Intelligence Report June 2010 and Olive Group Iraq Monthly Intelligence Report August 2010.

31 This data is drawn from Olive Group intelligence reports gathered between 2006-2010.

32 IRAMs usually consist of 8-14 propane cylinders filled with C4 explosive, propelled by 107mm rocket motors. Although often inaccurate, they can be lethal. On April 28, 2008, a barrage of 14 IRAMs killed two U.S. personnel and injured 16 in Baghdad. For details, see Ernesto Londono, "U.S. Troops in Iraq Face a Powerful New Weapon," *Washington Post*, July 10, 2008.

33 This data is drawn from Olive Group intelligence reports gathered between 2006-2010.

34 Personal interview, Olive Group analyst, October 10, 2010.

35 This data is drawn from Olive Group intelligence reports gathered between 2006-2010.

36 This data is drawn from Olive Group intelligence reports gathered in 2010.

37 Personal interviews, U.S. intelligence analysts and weapons intelligence specialists, dates and locations withheld.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 See the August 1, 2010 cache that was found in Zubayr, near Basra. As well as 76 rockets, 15 tons of TNT and significant amounts of bomb-making materiel, the cache included 41 magnets for making under-vehicle IEDs and silenced weapons. This information is based on Olive Group Basra Daily Intelligence Report, August 1, 2010.

Outlook for the Special Groups

The political situation in Iraq will have a significant effect on the further evolution of Special Groups. If, as seems likely, Moqtada al-Sadr joins key Iranian-backed parties such as Badr in the new government, many elements of PDB, AAH and KH will probably be drawn into the security forces as Badr personnel were in the post-2003 period. Some types of violence (such as rocketing of the government center in Baghdad) may decline, while targeted attacks on U.S. forces would persist or even intensify due to the new latitude enjoyed by such groups. Kidnap of Western contractors or military personnel has been the subject of government warnings during 2010 and could become a significant risk if U.S.-Iran tensions increase in coming years. Sectarian utilization of the Special Groups to target Sunni nationalist oppositionists could become a problem once again. If Iraqi government policy crosses any "red lines" (such as long-term U.S. military presence in Iraq, rapid rearmament or anti-Iranian oil policy), the Special Groups could be turned against the Iraqi state in service of Iranian interests, showering the government center with rockets or assassinating key individuals.

As has been shown throughout the Islamic Republic of Iran's 30-year engagement in Iraq, however, other Iraqi militant groups will continue to chart their own course and will make and break cease-fires according to their own interests.

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Fragmentation in the North Caucasus Insurgency

By Christopher Swift

THE OCTOBER 19, 2010 attack on the parliament building in Grozny, Chechnya's capital city, underscores the ferocity and tenacity of the North Caucasus insurgency. Timed to correspond with a visit by Russian Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliev, the assault killed four and injured 17. The perpetrators took no hostages, issued no statements, and made no demands. Each died by his own hand, detonating explosive vests during the initial attack and following the ensuing firefight with Interior Ministry (MDV) forces.¹

This short-lived siege followed a series of similar attacks across the Russian Federation. On March 29, two Dagestani *shahidki* attacked the Lubyanka and Park Kultury metro stations in Moscow, killing 40 commuters and wounding more than 100.² On March 31, a double suicide bombing in the Dagestani city of Kizlyar killed 12 and injured 23.³ On May 26, a suicide attack on a concert hall in Stavropol killed seven and injured another 40.⁴ Finally, on September 9, a suicide attack by Ingush militants on a market in Vladikavkaz killed 16 and injured 140.⁵

The frequency and intensity of these attacks illuminate a persistent, low-level insurrection. According to Russian Interior Minister Nurgaliev, insurgent attacks in Dagestan have killed 89 police officers and wounded 264 in the last year alone.⁶ Similar trends are evident in Ingushetia, where more than 400 police officers and 3,000 civilians were

killed during the last five years.⁷ Even Kabardino-Balkaria has succumbed to insurgent violence, with a May 1 bombing in the capital Nalchik killing one victim and wounding another 29.⁸

Until recently, Chechnya was the exception to this rule. Backed by the Kremlin, Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov ruthlessly yet effectively suppressed the secessionist insurgency through a mixture of aggressive counterterrorism tactics and repressive state surveillance. Amnesties and patronage reinforced Kadyrov's authority, with some rebels abandoning the insurrection and others joining pro-Kremlin militias. As recently as February 2009, the 34-year-old Chechen strongman appealed to exiled militants to return home.⁹ Kadyrov even appropriated religion, implementing a state-sponsored Islamization campaign in an effort to undermine Islamist and Salafist activism. From prohibiting alcohol and promoting polygamy, to mandating Islamic attire and religious education in Chechen schools, the result has been an uncertain mixture of superficial Shari'a and secular autocracy.

The Chechen parliament siege raises serious questions about Kadyrov's stabilization strategy. Despite Chechnya's relative autonomy and substantial federal support, secessionist impulses still persist. It also reveals important new developments within the insurgency itself. Coming just two months after the August 29 assault on Tsentoroi, Kadyrov's home village, the attack on Chechnya's parliament marks a shift from the diffuse bombing and ambushes witnessed in recent years to a more focused strategy targeting the Chechen regime. That focus, in turn, reflects ethnic and operational fragmentation within the Caucasian Front. With prominent field commanders challenging separatist leader Doku Umarov's authority, the North

1 "Terrorist Attack on Chechen Parliament in Grozny," RIA Novosti, October 19, 2010.

2 "Moscow Metro Bombing Masterminds 'Will Be Destroyed,'" BBC, March 29, 2010.

3 "12 killed, 23 Hospitalized in Dagestan Blasts," RIA Novosti, March 31, 2010.

4 "Death Toll from South Russia Terrorist Attack Reaches 6," RIA Novosti, May 27, 2010.

5 "Chislo postradavshikh vo vremya terakta vo Vladikavkaze previisipo 160 chelovek," Interfax, September 10, 2010.

6 James Broder, "Gunmen Attach Chechen Parliament, 6 Reported Dead," Voice of America, October 19, 2010.

7 "Ingushetia Militants Announce Moratorium on Killing Police," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, October 6, 2010.

8 "Nalchik Bombing Classed as Terrorist Attack," RIA Novosti, May 1, 2010.

9 Muslim Ibragimov, "President of Chechnya Calls Former Militants Back Home from Europe," Caucasian Knot, February 6, 2009.

Caucasus insurgency may be assuming a more localized, compartmentalized character.

This article examines that fragmentation in three stages. First, it describes the formation and limitations of the Caucasus Emirate and its military wing, the Caucasian Front. Second, it discusses the growing tensions between Umarov and three of the Front's leading field commanders. Third, it examines the operations undertaken by this breakaway faction, as well as the implications this schism could have for Islamic militancy in the wider region. The article concludes by evaluating the role of local agendas and national identities in limiting collaboration between militants, including those with a common ideology and adversary.

The Virtual Emirate

Protracted armed conflict has had a pernicious radicalizing effect across the North Caucasus. Launched in 1992 as an anti-colonial movement, the Chechen rebellion swiftly splintered into nationalist and Islamist factions with competing agendas and irreconcilable ideologies. By 1996, the quasi-autonomous Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) found itself mired in an internecine battle between these two groups, with nationalists advocating a constitutional republic within the boundaries of Chechnya's recognized borders, and Islamists imagining a regional emirate that would unify the North Caucasian Muslims under a system of Islamic law. Renewed hostilities with Russia gradually empowered the latter faction, with atrocities on both sides reinforcing notions of a perpetual, existential conflict between Muslims and non-believers.

This radicalization coincided with the decline of traditional Sufi orders, the diminution of the ChRI's military capacity, and the diffusion of insurgent violence to neighboring Muslim-majority republics. It also undermined the moderate ChRI leadership, with regional field commanders such as Umarov abandoning their ethno-nationalist agenda in favor of a more globalized Salafist outlook. By the time Umarov assumed command of the ChRI in June 2006, the insurgency had devolved into a series of loosely-coordinated *jama'ats* operating in

Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Kabardino-Balkaria, and even in the Orthodox Christian enclave of North Ossetia.

These conditions set the stage for Umarov's repudiation of the ChRI in October 2007 and subsequent declaration of a multiethnic Caucasus Emirate dedicated to "establishing Shari'a in its land and expelling the *kuffar*."¹⁰ This decision de-nationalized the Chechen rebellion, reducing Chechnya to a mere province, or *vilayat*,

"The attack on Chechnya's parliament marks a shift from the diffuse bombing and ambushes witnessed in recent years to a more focused strategy targeting the Chechen regime."

within the newly-established Emirate. Prompting swift and unequivocal condemnation from ChRI officials in the West, it drew an indelible line between the insurgency's Islamist and nationalist wings.¹¹

Umarov's declaration also challenged Chechen parochialism. Eager to attract foreign support and volunteers, the self-styled *amir* expressed solidarity with Muslims "fighting in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Palestine" while denouncing the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, "and all those waging war against Islam and Muslims" as his enemies.¹² The result was a shift from localized forms of Islamist resistance to a delocalized Salafist ideology that framed jihad in pan-Islamic and increasingly millenarian terms.

This shift produced limited results. Despite endorsements from prominent Salafist ideologues including Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abu

Basir al-Tartusi, the number of foreign fighters participating in the Caucasian Front continued to decline.¹³ Furthermore, Umarov's appeals to pan-Islamic solidarity failed to establish clear lines of command and control. Rather than augmenting the Chechen struggle, Ingush, Dagestani and other militants pursued their own local agendas under a nominal Chechen figurehead.

Diffusion and Fragmentation

Limited capacity perpetuates these problems. As a virtual state, the Caucasus Emirate lacks the defined territory or fiscal-military apparatus associated with robust, self-sustaining insurgencies. This explains the overreliance on ambushes, suicide attacks, and other provocative operations. Unable to impose and enforce their will, local *jama'ats* resort to theatrical violence aimed at provoking authorities and educating the masses. The result is an erratic pattern of insurrection, rather than a coordinated insurgency.

Equally important, however, is the Emirate's failure to galvanize indigenous aspirations and identities. On one level, Umarov's homogenized Salafist tropes create common cause among like-minded militants. They also open new avenues for self-radicalizing volunteers, including Muslims from other post-Soviet societies. Yet they have not produced the patterns of sustained social and political mobilization necessary to field an effective fighting force. United by a common ideology but divided into discrete ethnic and geographic entities, Umarov's imagined community lacks meaningful cohesion.

These deficiencies inform the fragmentation now evident in the Caucasian Front. Starting in late spring 2010, Chechen field commanders Aslambek Vadalov and Hussein Gakayev challenged Umarov's leadership, arguing that major decisions should be made by a war council, or *majlis*, rather than by decree.¹⁴ Joined by Ingush commander

10 "Amir Dokka's Statement of the Declaration of the Caucasian Emirate," Kavkaz Center, November 22, 2007.

11 Akhmed Zakayev, "Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs for the Chechen Republic of Ingushetia," Chechenpress.com, October 31, 2007.

12 "Amir Dokka's Statement of the Declaration of the Caucasian Emirate."

13 Cerwyn Moore and Paul Tumelty, "Foreign Fighters and the Case of Chechnya: A Critical Assessment," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31:5 (2008).

14 "Clarification of Emir Dokku Abu Usman in Connection with the Fitna Among the Mujahedeen," Kavkaz Center, October 18, 2010.

Tarkhan Gaziev, Vadalov and Gakayev sought greater autonomy, including the appointment of an independent Chechen *amir*.

These challenges precipitated a leadership crisis. On July 24, Umarov resigned and appointed Vadalov as his successor.¹⁵ Citing health concerns, he explained that “the jihad should be led by younger and more energetic commanders.”¹⁶ This announcement was a watershed, illuminating operational and perhaps even generational differences long obscured by triumphant jihadist rhetoric. Yet within days, the Emirate’s Kavkaz Center information agency reported that Vadalov’s appointment was merely a proposal. On August 4, Umarov repudiated his resignation, calling it “completely fabricated” and arguing that it was “not possible to step down” given conditions in the North Caucasus.¹⁷

The ensuing struggle drew clear lines between two increasingly irreconcilable factions. Led by Vadalov, Gakayev and Gaziev renounced their allegiance to Umarov.¹⁸ Umarov subsequently issued orders dismissing this newly-formed troika from their offices within the Emirate. The Emirate’s supreme *qadi* also intervened, with Seyfullah Gubdensky issuing a statement confirming Umarov as the insurgency’s sole legitimate leader. “[A] single province of the Caucasus Emirate has no right, according to Shari’a, to appoint or remove the *amir*,” Seyfullah argued, “and if they try to do so, they become bugats and sinners.”¹⁹ Yet by August the damage was already done, with more than 20 local commanders flocking to the troika’s banner.²⁰

15 “Amir IK Dokku Abu Usman obyavil o svoem preem-nike. Im stal Amir Aslambek,” DhamaatTakbir.com, July 24, 2010.

16 “CE’s Emir Dokku Abu Usman Resigned and Appointed Aslambek Vadalov Emir of the Caucasus Emirate,” Kavkaz Center, August 1, 2010.

17 “Emir of the Caucasus Emirate Dokku Abu Usman Cancels His Resignation, Calling it Fabricated, and Makes Special Statement on this Occasion,” Kavkaz Center, August 4, 2010.

18 “Aslambek Vadalov Resigns as Deputy Emir of Caucasus Emirate,” Kavkaz Center, August 13, 2010.

19 “CE Supreme Judge, Emir of Dagestan Province Seyfullah: ‘Emir Dokku Abu Usman is the Sole Legitimate Ruler,’” Kavkaz Center, August 13, 2010.

20 “Madzhis Amirov Vilaiata Nokhchiichov,” Daymohk.

Parochial Priorities

At first blush, the troika’s repudiation of the Caucasus Emirate suggests a resurgent Chechen nationalism. Exiled ChRI officials initially welcomed the split, with the London-based Akhmed Zakayev describing Vadalov as a fellow patriot who rejected Umarov’s strategy of targeting civilians.²¹ Some Russian analysts adopted a similar view, noting that collaboration between Zakayev’s ChRI and Vadalov’s faction could open the way for a revitalized Chechen secessionist movement.²²

Such speculation remains premature. Although Vadalov, Gakayev, and Gaziev repudiated Umarov and abandoned the Emirate, they still espouse a radical Islamist agenda. Moreover, their close and continuing collaboration with the foreign Arab fighter Khaled Yusef Muhammad al-Emitat (also known as Muhannad) indicates a strong Salafist outlook. These facts indicate fragmentation, not transformation. Rather than reverting to secular nationalism, the troika is merely pursuing a more parochial agenda.

This agenda involves a simplified target set. Unlike Umarov, who speaks of liberating Astrakhan and the Volga region,²³ the troika emphasizes Chechnya and the Kremlin-backed Chechen regime. On September 3, for example, Vadalov and Muhannad released a video confirming their role in the August 29 Tsentoroi operation.²⁴ On October 20, the MVD implicated Gakayev’s forces in the attack on the Chechen Parliament.²⁵ Combined with propaganda reviving ethnocentric terms such as “Ichkerii” and “Nokhchii,” these operations suggest a re-animation of the same intra-Chechen struggles that once dominated the North Caucasus insurgency.

org, August 2010.

21 Marina Golovinina, “New Chechen Rebel Leader is No Terrorist, Says Ally,” Reuters, August 3, 2010.

22 “Akhmed Zakayev svyazal ukhod Umarova c potereii doveriya boevikov,” Lenta.ru, August 3, 2010.

23 “Caucasus Emirate’s Emir Dokka Abu Usman: ‘We Will Liberate the Krasnodar Territory, Astrakhan and the Volga Lands...’” Kavkaz Center, March 8, 2010.

24 “Amirii mudzhakhedov Ichkerii,” Chechenews.com, September 3, 2010.

25 “Probable Organizer of Grozny Attack Named by Chechen Government,” Russia Today, October 20, 2010.

The re-localization of Chechen resistance carries serious consequences for the Caucasus Emirate. On one level, the troika’s withdrawal exposes the weaknesses in Umarov’s multiethnic coalition. Although neither faction has come to blows, their rhetoric and mutual recrimination suggests little room for meaningful collaboration. The move also isolates smaller insurgent groups such as Yarmouk in Kabardino-Balkaria and Kataib al-Khoul in North Ossetia from Jama`at Shari`at in Dagestan. These conditions invite new alignments. With Umarov increasingly dependent on Gubdensky and other Jama`at Shari`at commanders, Dagestan could become the locus for future Emirate operations.

These observations focus greater attention on indigenous factors—on the aspirations that inform Islamic militancy and the resentments that fuel it. The fact that senior Chechen commanders would repudiate the Caucasus Emirate reveals an ethnic parochialism at odds with cosmopolitan notions of jihad. Far from subordinating themselves to a pan-Islamic enterprise, the troika appears to be selectively adapting globalized ideologies to their own highly localized agenda.

The net result is a change in policy and strategy, rather than a reversion to ethno-nationalist ideology. Yet the outcome may ultimately prove much the same. By distinguishing themselves as an essentially Chechen endeavor, the troika elicits support from a discrete, concrete community with a long history of grievances. By targeting Kadyrov, they give those grievances a tangible, immediate outlet. Informed by nearly two decades of chronic, persistent conflict, the troika’s parochialism may succeed where Umarov’s pan-Islamism failed.

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Assessing the Success of Leadership Targeting

By Austin Long

WAR IS FUNDAMENTALLY a clash of organizations. Organizations provide the vital mechanisms that mobilize and convert resources into combat power as well as applying that combat power against the enemy.¹ This is true not only of conventional militaries, but also of insurgent and terrorist groups.² One operational technique deployed against insurgent and terrorist groups seeks to destroy or cripple the organization by targeting senior and mid-level leadership. In particular, this technique has been a major component of the U.S.-led campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.³ This technique, termed leadership targeting, has attracted a modest amount of recent scholarship seeking to evaluate its effectiveness.⁴

1 Allan R. Millet, Williamson Murray, and Kenneth Watman, "The Effectiveness of Military Organizations," *International Security* 11:1 (1986); Martin van Creveld, *Fighting Power: German and U.S. Army Performance, 1939-1945* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982).

2 Mary Anderson, Michael Arnsten, and Harvey Averch, *Insurgent Organization and Operations: A Case Study of the Viet Cong in the Delta, 1964-1966* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1967); Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf Jr., *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1970); Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Abdulkader H. Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).

3 Graham Turbiville, *Hunting Leadership Targets in Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorist Operations* (Hurlburt Field, FL: Joint Special Operations University Press, 2007); Michael T. Flynn et al., "Employing ISR: SOF Best Practices," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 50 (2008); Seth Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010); Mark Urban, *Task Force Black: The Explosive True Story of the SAS and the Secret War in Iraq* (London: Little, Brown, 2010).

4 Jenna Jordan, "When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation," *Security Studies* 18:4 (2009); Michael Freedman, "The Headless Horseman: A Theoretical and Strategic Assessment of Leadership Targeting," paper presented at the 2010 International Studies Association Convention; Alex Wilner, "Targeted Killings in Afghanistan: Measuring Coercion and Deterrence in Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33:4 (2010).

Yet despite its policy importance, leadership targeting remains understudied. This is especially true of leadership targeting in Iraq and Afghanistan, and it is in part due to the high levels of secrecy that surround these efforts as well as the general difficulty in evaluating the effects of such targeting on clandestine organizations operating in war zones. More can be done, however, to develop both the theoretical understanding of these efforts and also the empirical picture of what has and is happening in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This article begins with the argument that the key variable in determining the overall effectiveness of leadership targeting is the level of institutionalization of the organization targeted. Moreover, this is true not only of insurgent or terrorist groups targeted, but also of groups opposed to such organizations that are targeted by insurgents or terrorists. This argument is then illustrated by evidence and vignettes from Iraq.

The Importance of Institutionalization

In combat, whether conventional or not, all organizations lose leadership at various levels. On the Eastern Front in World War II, for example, the German Army suffered massive losses among its officer corps. Omer Bartov estimates that from May 1942 to May 1945, the elite Grossdeutschland Division suffered casualties among its officers equivalent to three or four times its initial complement.⁵ Yet even this is an understatement of the scale and speed of leadership casualties among the division's frontline combat units. The division's Sixth Grenadier Company had 10 different leaders from July 26 to September 5, 1943. During the course of fighting on March 8-9, 1944, the company had three different commanders.⁶ In November 1942, the 2nd Battalion of the division's 2nd Infantry Regiment "lost its commander, adjutant, as well as all company and platoon commanders in the course of one single Russian artillery barrage which lasted only twenty minutes."⁷

5 Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941-45: German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 16.

6 Ibid., p. 17.

7 Ibid.

Despite these ferocious casualties, the Grossdeutschland Division was able to continually replace leaders and remained a coherent and effective combat unit, serving as a mobile reserve for much of the Eastern Front until almost the end of the war.⁸

What explains the Grossdeutschland Division's ability to remain an effective combat force despite loss of leadership? The answer is that it could efficiently and effectively replace its lost leaders due to institutionalization.⁹ Institutionalization requires two elements. The first is the existence of hierarchy and specialization in the organization. The second is that authority and position in the organization derives from that hierarchy. These two factors allow the organization to routinely and smoothly replace lost leaders.

This process is so normal and routine in conventional military organizations that it is simply taken for granted. Yet it is also applicable to other organizations such as insurgent groups or anti-insurgent militias. These organizations are not equally institutionalized, and therefore variation in the effects of the loss of leadership should be expected. This leads to a simple testable hypothesis. Organizations that are well-institutionalized should be expected to suffer only temporary disruption from losing leadership, while groups that are poorly institutionalized should be crippled or even collapse when subjected to a leadership targeting campaign.

The coding used for "institutionalization" will be based on whether an organization exhibits functional specialization, hierarchy, and bureaucratic processes for conducting operations.¹⁰ An

8 For an overview of the division's operations, see James Lucas, *Germany's Elite Panzer Force: Grossdeutschland* (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1978).

9 On the institution for replacing lost German Army officers, see William S. Dunn, *Heroes or Traitors: The German Replacement Army, the July Plot, and Adolf Hitler* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), pp. 1-14.

10 The coding is binary, with each of the three attributes either coded as present or absent. This is clearly an abstraction, as these attributes are actually continuous rather than binary. However, this abstraction should be valid for at least a plausibility probe of the hypothesis. Functional specialization is coded based on the presence or absence of specialized sub-units (such as those focused on recruitment or finance) and/or a division

organization that possesses these attributes will be coded as “well-institutionalized,” while one that does not will be coded as “poorly institutionalized.” The remainder of this article tests this hypothesis with a series of vignettes from Iraq.¹¹

The Iraqi Case

In Iraq, Anbar Province was the heartland of the Sunni insurgency from 2003-2007. The insurgency in Anbar had multiple organizations, with some more institutionalized than others. Al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI) was, in 2004, a new organization but one that was rapidly institutionalizing, creating hierarchy and specialization through a system of *amirs* (leaders), who by 2006 were functionally specialized and existed in a hierarchical order with bureaucratic processes for conducting operations (as evidenced by copious captured documents and computer records).¹² For example, AQI in a given town or region would be led by an overall *amir*, who was supported by an administrative *amir*, a military *amir*, a media *amir*, and possibly others depending on the time and place. There were also specific sub-units within the organization dedicated to bringing foreign fighters into the country and to generating revenue through various licit and illicit activities. These *amirs* both directed local cells beneath them and reported to more senior leadership. In short, by 2006 at the latest AQI was a well-institutionalized organization.

of labor among leaders along functional lines (e.g. the military staff system with officers focused on personnel, intelligence, operations, logistics, etc.). Hierarchy is coded based on the presence of clear chains of command and reporting derived from position in the organization rather than personal charisma or traditional authority. Bureaucratic process is coded based on the presence or absence of record-keeping, standard operating procedure, creation and distribution of codes of conduct or lessons learned. An organization where all three are present is coded as highly institutionalized; all others are coded as poorly institutionalized.

11 In addition to specific citations, these vignettes are amplified by the author's personal experience and interviews in Iraq in 2007-2008.

12 On AQI organization, see Jacob Shapiro, “Bureaucratic Terrorists: Al Qaida in Iraq's Management and Finances,” and Anonymous, “Smuggling, Syria, and Spending,” in Brian Fishman ed., *Bombers, Bank Accounts, and Bleed-out: Al Qaida's Road In and Out of Iraq* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2008).

Yet in 2004 other organizations existed and were at least as potent in terms of raw manpower and assets. One organization in particular was the Falluja Shura Council, headed by Abdullah Janabi, a prominent cleric. Yet unlike AQI, which was seeking to institutionalize, the Falluja Shura Council relied heavily on Janabi's personal gravitas and charisma (*wasta*) to hold the organization together. There is no evidence it developed functional specialization or more than a very loose hierarchy, much less any bureaucratic

“Well-institutionalized organizations such as AQI have proven extraordinarily resistant to even sustained leadership targeting efforts, suffering disruption but able to continually replace lost leaders.”

procedures. Janabi, along with AQI's Omar Hadid, was one of the primary leadership targets when coalition forces launched Operation al-Fajr (The Dawn) to retake Falluja in November 2004. Omar Hadid was killed and Janabi was forced to flee Iraq and has not returned. As a result, the Falluja Shura Council collapsed, while AQI regrouped in other parts of Iraq, including Ramadi and al-Qaim.¹³

In Ramadi, AQI, led by an Iraqi known as Abu Khattab, came into conflict with local tribal leaders as well as other insurgent groups. By the end of 2005, this conflict had turned violent, with AQI engaging in skirmishes with members of the nationalist 1920 Revolution Brigade affiliated with the cleric Muhammad Mahmoud Latif, and with tribal elements including the Anbar People's Committee affiliated with the prominent Shaykh Nasir al-Fahadawi. Like the Falluja Shura Council, the Anbar People's Council relied heavily

on the *wasta* of Shaykh Nasir and Muhammad Mahmoud Latif, with little evidence of institutionalization.

AQI's response to this resistance was to unleash its own leadership targeting campaign, which killed both Shaykh Nasir and nearly killed Mohammed Mahmoud Latif, who was forced to flee Iraq. In the same time period, Abu Khattab was killed along with other AQI leaders. The effects of these leadership losses varied greatly. AQI continued to grow in strength in 2006, while the Anbar People's Committee collapsed and other tribal leaders were cowed into ceasing resistance against AQI, at least temporarily.¹⁴

The situation in Ramadi began to change in the summer of 2006 when some tribal leaders were able to mitigate AQI's ability to target them by allying with the United States.¹⁵ These tribal leaders, along with U.S. forces, continued to target AQI's leadership. Yet AQI remained combat effective, even preparing to launch a massive assault on Ramadi in June 2007.¹⁶

AQI successfully targeted one of the main leaders of the Ramadi resistance, Shaykh Sattar al-Rishawi, in late 2007, but by that time the U.S. military had enabled some institutionalization to the resistance (principally by having tribesmen join the police or quasi-police units called Provincial Security Forces).¹⁷ Shaykh Sattar's death in late 2007 therefore had substantially less effect (although it did provoke frictions among potential successors) than it likely would have had a year earlier. Leadership targeting has continued by both sides in 2010, with AQI continuing to show resilience while anti-AQI

14 “Marine Corps Assessment of Iraq Situation,” *Washington Post*, February 2, 2007; “AQI Situation Report,” declassified, translated internal AQI document, available at www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/I2-O60316-01-Trans.pdf; Toby Harnden, “US Army Admits Iraqis Outnumber Foreign Fighters as its Main Enemy,” *Daily Telegraph*, December 3, 2005; “Tearing Down al-Qaida in Iraq,” press briefing, Multi-National Force-Iraq, December 2006.

15 Austin Long, “The Anbar Awakening,” *Survival* 50:2 (2008); John A. McCarty, “The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives,” *Washington Quarterly* 32:1 (2009).

16 Ann Scott Tyson, “A Deadly Clash at Donkey Island,” *Washington Post*, August 19, 2007.

17 Alissa Rubin, “Sheik's Allies Vow Revenge for His Killing,” *New York Times*, September 15, 2007.

groups (known as the Sons of Iraq) are reporting defections to AQI at least in part because U.S. forces and the government of Iraq are not acting to mitigate AQI's leadership targeting.¹⁸

A final vignette illustrates the differing effect of leadership targeting on well-institutionalized versus poorly institutionalized organizations. On June 26, 2008, a major meeting of shaykhs,

“This does not mean that leadership targeting has no effect on well-institutionalized organizations. It is still disruptive at a minimum as even very effective replacement of leaders is not instantaneous.”

political figures, and coalition forces in Karma, a small town northeast of Falluja, was struck by a suicide bomber (presumed to be an AQI affiliate). The blast killed several prominent Iraqis and Americans, including the respected mayor of Karma and a U.S. Marine battalion commander.¹⁹ The battalion commander was almost immediately replaced, on an interim basis, by one of his subordinates. In contrast, the attack created turmoil in the local tribe, the al-Jumayli. While it did not kill the tribe's shaykh, it substantially intimidated and discredited him. After some deliberation, during which the tribe's ability to act was limited, the shaykh was effectively sidelined in favor of a respected kinsman of a more martial bent.

Conclusion

The foregoing is suggestive at best but does support the hypothesis. Well-institutionalized organizations such as AQI have proven extraordinarily resistant to even sustained leadership targeting efforts, suffering disruption but able to continually replace lost leaders. In contrast, poorly institutionalized organizations, both insurgent and anti-insurgent, appear vulnerable to leadership targeting.

This does not mean that leadership targeting has no effect on well-institutionalized organizations. It is still disruptive at a minimum as even the effective replacement of leaders is not instantaneous. Furthermore, such efforts also exert a suppressive effect on leaders, as they must undertake extensive security measures to avoid being targeted. Yet these are tactical and operational rather than strategic effects. In terms of President Barack Obama's declared goal of “disrupting, dismantling, and defeating” al-Qa`ida, leadership targeting, whether carried out by special operations forces in Afghanistan or drones in Pakistan, can create disruption and temporary dismantling, but it cannot defeat the organization.

For policymakers, this in turn suggests that expectations and resource allocation should be managed with an eye to the institutionalization of both hostile and allied organizations. If confronted by poorly institutionalized insurgent organizations, leadership targeting can have a substantial effect and should be resourced accordingly. However, dedicating massive resources to leadership targeting of well-institutionalized groups, while under-resourcing efforts to protect poorly institutionalized but useful anti-insurgent organizations, appears sub-optimal.

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Revolution Muslim: Downfall or Respite?

By Aaron Y. Zelin

IN JULY 2010, Zachary Chesser was arrested in the United States for trying to join Somalia's al-Shabab terrorist group. His arrest brought attention to a U.S.-based extremist group operating in the New York City area, known as Revolution Muslim, of which Chesser was a member.¹ Chesser's arrest, however, appears to be the apex that disguised the seeming decline of Revolution Muslim. After suffering a series of leadership problems and disputes, Revolution Muslim was increasingly used by UK-based extremists seeking to skirt British hate speech and incitement laws by using the U.S.-based Revolution Muslim website to distribute their literature and notifications of public events.² The violent calls by British extremists eventually led to the shutdown of the Revolution Muslim website in November 2010. Shortly after, Revolution Muslim's leader said that the group had been disbanded, and he announced the creation of a new, supposedly more moderate organization, called Islam Policy.

Since this transition is recent, it is too early to determine whether Revolution Muslim will follow in the footsteps of the British group al-Muhajiroun by returning to confrontation merely under a different name, or if it will follow a model closer to groups such

18 Jane Arraf, “Two Iraq Al Qaeda Leaders Killed: Did They Really Get Abu Omar al-Baghdadi?” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 19, 2010; Timothy Williams and Du-raid Adnan, “Sunnis in Iraq Allied With U.S. Quitting to Rejoin Rebels,” *New York Times*, October 16, 2010.

19 Hannah Allam and Jamal Naji, “3 Marines Among Dead in Attack on Iraqi Tribal Leaders,” *McClatchy Newspapers*, June 26, 2008; Sam Dagher, “SUVs and Rifles,” *New York Times*, January 23, 2009.

1 See, for example, Paul Cruickshank's article in the *CTC Sentinel* that provided a detailed explanation and analysis of the roots of the Revolution Muslim group in the United Kingdom, its evolution in the United States, and how the organization had led to recent arrests of American jihadists. See Paul Cruickshank, “The Growing Danger from Radical Islamist Groups in the United States,” *CTC Sentinel* 3:8 (2010).

2 The United Kingdom's policing of websites that host extremist content is much stricter than in the United States, where the First Amendment provides significant protection to extremist discourse. For example, when speaking about the extremist content of Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-`Awlaqi, UK Baroness Neville-Jones said, “The websites in which feature his [al-`Awlaqi] terrorist message would categorically not be allowed in the UK. If they were hosted in the UK they would be taken down.” For details on that quote, see Jim Wolf, “Britain Urges U.S. to Take Down Extremist Websites,” *Reuters*, October 26, 2010.

as Hizb al-Tahrir, Tabligh Jama'at, or the Muslim Brotherhood by adopting a less hostile posture. This article recounts the factors that led to the recent demise of Revolution Muslim, while also providing insight on its new incarnation, Islam Policy.

Leadership Disputes

Revolution Muslim was founded by Yousef al-Khattab³ and Younes Abdullah Muhammad⁴ in late 2007 and early 2008.⁵ In late 2009, al-Khattab resigned as *amir* (leader) of Revolution Muslim, reportedly due to the radical direction that Younes was taking the group.⁶ Al-Khattab subsequently promoted Abdullah as-Sayf as the new *amir* while Younes was away in Saudi Arabia. Upon Younes' return to the United States in April 2010, however, he forcefully retook the reins of leadership and removed as-Sayf from the organization because of as-Sayf's Sufi leanings. Younes designated himself as the sole *amir*.⁷

Exacerbating the leadership disputes, three members of the group were arrested in the United States in June and July 2010. On June 6, Carlos Eduardo Almonte and Mohamed Mahmood Alessa were apprehended while trying to leave the United States to join al-Shabab.⁸ Similarly, on July 21, Zachary Chesser was arrested for the same crime.⁹ Following Chesser's arrest, Younes went "underground," likely due to fear of further law enforcement action. While Younes was underground, British jihadists seemingly took an

even greater role in the dissemination of content on the Revolution Muslim website, moving the group in an even more radical direction and eventually causing the website's demise.

Rise of British Influence

The content on Revolution Muslim's website could be divided into four categories: news, original articles, upcoming events, and propaganda materials. When Revolution Muslim first came online in 2008, much of its

"It appears that the overzealousness of British extremists helped lead to the demise of the Revolution Muslim website."

content highlighted key daily news articles, which they called *Akbar al-Yawm* (news of the day), along with its "Street Daw'ah" (outreach) efforts in the New York City metropolitan area. Examples of the larger "Street Daw'ah" events included boycotting Starbucks due to the company's alleged ties with Israel, protesting the sentencing and alleged mistreatment of Aafia Siddiqui, and an outreach event in front of Wall Street following the collapse of the economy in 2008 to highlight the injustices of the capitalist system.¹⁰ The website posted many writings from Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-'Awlaqi, as well as speeches from Jamaican cleric Abdullah al-Faisal.

Although Revolution Muslim's website had always featured content relevant to both the British and American Muslim extremist scenes, beginning in April 2010 that content had more of a British bent. Since April, the Revolution Muslim website highlighted 15 events and protests in Britain, in contrast to

only three in the United States.¹¹ For example, Muslims Against Crusades, an al-Muhajiroun successor group, organized an event in Westminster titled "One Law for All...Shar'iah [sic]" in June.¹² The Muslims against Crusades also announced an "Emergency Demonstration" on the Revolution Muslim website in late July in response to an alleged report, which is not cited on the website, regarding the murder of innocent Muslims.¹³ The Revolution Muslim website also started posting more content from Islam4UK and from Shaykh Omar Bakri Mohammed, the founder of al-Muhajiroun who is now exiled in Lebanon but still active with British jihadists. Additionally, only one of the three events announced in the United States were actually organized or associated with Revolution Muslim. Moreover, during this period there was no longer information or content about "Street Daw'ah" events in the New York city area.

3 Yousef al-Khattab is a Jewish convert to Islam from New Jersey.

4 Younes Abdullah Muhammad is a convert to Islam, and he reportedly received a degree in international affairs from Columbia University.

5 According to J.M. Berger, the Revolution Muslim website domain was registered in December 2007. The website went live in January 2008 and was originally a forum, but was later changed to a blog format in April 2008.

6 For more details, read al-Khattab's explanation on his personal website, available at www.yousefalkhattab.com/p/why-i-left-revolution-muslim.html.

7 Ibid.

8 Perry Chiaramonte, C.J. Sullivan, Murray Weiss, and Chuck Bennett, "Bloodlust of NJ 'Jihadists,'" *New York Post*, June 7, 2010.

9 Andrew Lebovich, "The LWOT: FBI Arrests 'Revolution Muslim' Writer; Gitmo Prisoner Forced to Return to Algeria is Missing," *Foreign Policy*, July 22, 2010.

10 For more on the *da'wa* activities mentioned, see: "Starbucks Boycott Trailer," Revolution Muslim, February 18, 2008; "Protest - Court Hearing for Aafia Siddiqui," Revolution Muslim, August 25, 2008; "A Rally for Aafia Siddiqui and Other Muslim Political Prisoners in America!" Revolution Muslim, May 4, 2010; "Dawa Tour - Wall Street," Revolution Muslim, September 23, 2008.

11 The British events, along with the date the announcement was posted on the Revolution Muslim website, included: "International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the London Guantánamo Campaign," June 25, 2010; "Ummah Rise: Demonstration to Defend the Symbols of Islam," June 30, 2010; "Ummah Rise," July 21, 2010; "UK Women Only Conference; Burqa or no Burqa? 11th July 2010," June 29, 2010; "Islamic Conference: State Terrorism: 24 July 2010," July 7, 2010; "Football Tournament," July 25, 2010; "Demonstration: Today, 5th August," August 4, 2010; "Shariah4Pakistan - Demonstration Against Traitor: Asif Ali Zardari in London," August 19, 2010; "Slave to the Streets - Today, 27th August 2010 - Ramadhan Conference," August 25, 2010; "International Burn the American Flag Day 2010: Demonstration In Response To Burn The Quran Day On 9/11 @ 1pm," September 11, 2010; "Conference: Ramadan-The Month of Victory," August 31, 2010; "Muslims Confront Pope Benedict XVI - Saturday 18 September Demonstration in London," September 18, 2010; "Islamic Revival Conference," November 2, 2010. The U.S. events, along with the date the announcement was posted on the Revolution Muslim website, included: "Protest Netanyahu in New York City," July 6, 2010; "Stand with Lynne Stewart - The Lawyer of Omar Abdul Rahman," July 14, 2010; "Global Islamic Conference: Today, 31st July 2010," July 30, 2010.

12 Al-Muhajiroun (which now goes under other alias names) was founded by Omar Bakri Muhammad who fled London following the 7/7 attacks and was recently arrested in Lebanon. Currently, Anjem Choudary leads al-Muhajiroun and the group's current primary alias is "Muslims Against Crusades."

13 "Emergency Demonstration," Revolution Muslim, July 26, 2010.

It appears that the reason for the increase in content related to the United Kingdom is that British Muslims were using the U.S.-based Revolution Muslim website to skirt recent hate speech and incitement laws that have hampered their activities in the United Kingdom. In 2006 and 2007, British authorities passed two laws that made it increasingly difficult to distribute material that could be viewed as hate speech or incitement to crime or terrorism. The Racial and Religious Hatred Act of 2006 amended the Public Order Act of 1986 by adding Part 3A, which prohibits “a person who uses threatening words or behavior, or displays any written material which is threatening, is guilty of an offence if he intends thereby to stir up religious hatred.”¹⁴

Although the intent of the hate speech law was not necessarily established to curb anti-Christian or anti-Jewish rhetoric, it created an issue for British Muslim extremists who were distributing such materials on the internet.¹⁵ Furthermore, a year and a half later, the Serious Crime Act of 2007 legislation passed, replacing the British common law crime of incitement with a statutory offense of encouraging or assisting crime.¹⁶ Along with the former law, it became harder for al-Muhajiroun successor groups (such as Islam4UK, The Savior Sect, and al-Ghuraba) to cross the boundaries of hate speech or incitement using UK-hosted servers, as UK hosting companies apparently remove such content quickly. As a result of these laws, British Muslim extremists have used foreign web servers, including those in the United States, to disseminate their content.¹⁷ Revolution Muslim was part of this trend.

14 Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 (c. 1), United Kingdom Statute Law, February 16, 2006.

15 The law that passed in 2006 was the third time the UK Parliament attempted to pass it into legislation. The Labor Party first tried in the 2001 Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Bill and later in the 2004-2005 Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill.

16 Serious Crime Act 2007 (c. 27), United Kingdom Statute Law, October 30, 2007.

17 The reason U.S. web hosting companies are especially popular (compared to hosting companies in other countries) is because they are more reliable and have less downtime.

Nevertheless, it appears that the overzealousness of British extremists helped lead to the demise of the Revolution Muslim website. On November 3, one of the website’s users, Bilal Ahmad, published a “hit list” of UK parliamentary members who voted for the war in Iraq.¹⁸ Two days later, the Revolution Muslim website was suspended, reportedly by its hosting company at the prompting of U.S. and UK government officials.¹⁹

The Dawn of Islam Policy

On November 12, more than a week after the suspension of the Revolution Muslim website, Younes returned to the public spotlight. He announced the formation of a new group, Islam Policy, into which Revolution Muslim would be absorbed. Younes also said that the days of abrasive outreach activities were over, and that a new strategy had to be adopted. The suspension of the Revolution Muslim website apparently made Younes realize that he needed to take the U.S.-based extremist scene in a new direction: “I have been going through some personal alterations with regard to physical, mental and spiritual space and was eager to alter some of the approach I had been being informed of when this recent spate of bad news hit.”²⁰ Younes said that the Islam Policy website will focus more on educating individuals so that they can better understand the issues important to Muslims and thus make more coherent arguments to promote their ideological beliefs.

18 “MPs That Voted for War on Iraq,” Revolution Muslim, November 3, 2010; Bilal Ahmad, a member of Islam4UK (a successor group to al-Muhajiroun), was arrested on November 10 for publishing the hit list post. Ahmad was charged under the The Racial and Religious Hatred Act of 2006 since his post was actionable incitement. Most cases are merely “incitement,” so the police/security services prefer monitoring the individuals since they do not represent an immediate threat. For more, see “Man Arrested over Website Listing Iraq War MPs,” BBC, November 10, 2010.

19 James Gordon Meek and Alison Gendar, “Local Jihadist Website Tied to Terror Thugs Returns Under New Name, IslamPolicy.com,” *New York Daily News*, November 21, 2010.

20 “Announcement from IslamPolicy.com - on Transfer from RevolutionMuslim,” Islam Policy, November 12, 2010.

On November 20, Younes released a new treatise for Islam Policy, titled “On Crafting Islamic Policy: The Methodology of Islamic Social Science.”²¹ It would be a worthwhile study for practitioners to compare this new tract with Younes’ essay titled “By All Means Necessary,” which he wrote on December 7, 2008. This might shed light on whether Islam Policy is truly breaking from Revolution Muslim or continuing that cause using innuendo and less confrontational tactics.

Conclusion

Although Revolution Muslim’s website is down and Younes seems to be taking its successor group in a new direction, the Britons who helped create Revolution Muslim are still using U.S.-hosted websites to disseminate their content.²² This tactic could become an innovative model for other European jihadists who live in countries with strict hate speech and incitement laws.

Despite the apparent decline of Revolution Muslim and its confrontational tactics, the domestic terrorism threat to the United States has not diminished. The recent case of Somali-American Mohamed Osman Mohamud, who attempted to detonate what he believed was an explosives-laden vehicle near a tree-lighting ceremony in Portland on November 26, is demonstrative of this. Lessons from past extremist movements show that many of Revolution Muslim’s more radical followers may not agree with Younes’ seemingly less confrontational direction. Indeed, this is one reason why Almonte, Alessa, and Chesser chose to travel to Somalia to fight with Somalia’s al-Shabab. For them, fighting the jihad with words was not enough.

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21 “IslamPolicy.com – On Crafting Islamic Policy: The Methodology of Islamic Social Science,” Islam Policy, November 20, 2010.

22 To name a few, the following websites, which are based in the United Kingdom, are hosted on web servers in the United States: Salafi Media; Muslim’s Against Crusades; Izharudeen; Authentic Tawheed; and The Tawheed Movement.

Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

October 1, 2010 (GLOBAL): Usama bin Ladin purportedly released a new audio message, titled "Pauses with the Method of Relief Work." In the message, Bin Ladin criticized flood relief efforts in Pakistan, saying, "Millions of children are out in the open air, lacking basic elements of living, including drinking water, resulting in their bodies shedding liquids and subsequently their death." He said there was a need for action against climate change, saying that global warming was causing "great catastrophes throughout the Islamic world." - *Reuters, October 1*

October 1, 2010 (IRAQ): Ali al-Maliki, the chief of security for southern Iraq, warned that the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) plans to attack "a number of oil facilities" in the country. - *UPI, October 1*

October 1, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Approximately 20 militants destroyed at least 27 NATO supply trucks in Shikarpur in Sindh Province. - *The News International, October 2*

October 2, 2010 (GLOBAL): Usama bin Ladin purportedly released a second audio statement in two days, again warning of the dangers of climate change. Bin Ladin discussed the cost and equipment necessary to build embankments to control flooding. He also criticized affluent Muslim countries for not providing more assistance to Pakistanis in the wake of catastrophic flooding. - *New York Times, October 2*

October 2, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. drone strike killed nine militants from the Badar Mansur group in Datta Khel of North Waziristan Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *New York Times, October 2*

October 2, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. drone strike killed eight militants in Datta Khel of North Waziristan Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. It was the second drone strike of the day. - *New York Times, October 2*

October 3, 2010 (UNITED STATES): The U.S. State Department issued a travel alert for U.S. citizens in Europe due to increased concern about the possibility of a large-scale al-Qa`ida attack on the continent. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, "Intelligence officials in the U.S. and Europe have said an increase in activity in recent weeks suggests that a small cell of potential terrorists hiding in North Waziristan, a Pakistani tribal region, is preparing an attack [in Europe] that could be as spectacular as the 2008 raids in Mumbai, India, that killed 166 people." - *Los Angeles Times, October 4*

October 3, 2010 (ITALY): Officials in France announced that Italian police arrested a French national in early September suspected of having links to a network recruiting fighters for Afghanistan. The man, identified as Riahd Hennouni, was arrested in Naples in southern Italy. Italian newspapers reported that Hennouni is 28-years-old, of Algerian origin, and a possible member of al-Qa`ida. - *AP, October 3; CNN, October 4*

October 3, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Assaultants on motorcycles sprayed bullets at 28 NATO oil tankers near Islamabad, causing the tankers to catch fire. Six people were killed in the attack. - *The News International, October 4*

October 4, 2010 (JORDAN): A Jordanian military court sentenced Nabil Mohammed Amer to life in prison for leading a cell that plotted attacks against the country's army and intelligence services. Nine others were jailed for 15 years in prison as part of the plot, which involved plans to kidnap the children of intelligence officers. - *BBC, October 4; Bloomberg, October 4*

October 4, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Approximately 20 tanker trucks carrying fuel for NATO troops in Afghanistan were attacked at a depot in Islamabad. At least three people were killed during the pre-dawn incident. The Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility. - *Voice of America, October 4*

October 4, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Two gunmen on motorcycles torched two NATO supply trucks in Baluchistan Province. - *Voice of America, October 4*

October 4, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. drone strike killed at least eight militants in Mir Ali in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. A number of German nationals were reportedly among the dead. - *Voice of America, October 4*

October 4, 2010 (PHILIPPINES): The United States assured the Philippines that it will maintain its military presence in the country until the al-Qa`ida-linked Abu Sayyaf Group is defeated. - *AFP, October 4*

October 5, 2010 (FRANCE): French authorities arrested 12 men suspected of having ties to al-Qa`ida and terrorism. - *Jerusalem Post, October 5*

October 5, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): NATO forces announced the capture of a Taliban leader "directly involved" in the kidnapping of *New York Times* journalist Stephen Farrell in September 2009. The militant was identified as the Taliban's district leader for Chahar Darah district in Kunduz Province. He was captured in Takhar Province. - *CNN, October 5*

October 5, 2010 (SAUDI ARABIA): Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) threatened to launch new attacks against Saudi royal family members. AQAP warned, "We say to the tyrants that we can get you in your offices, we can get you in your bedrooms. I advise you to check before going to bed that there's no suicide bomber or bomb in the room." - *AFP, October 5*

October 6, 2010 (YEMEN): A rocket-propelled grenade struck a British diplomatic vehicle in Sana`a, wounding three people. The vehicle was carrying Britain's deputy ambassador to Yemen, Fiona Gibb. She escaped unhurt. The attack occurred on Khawlan Street in the capital. Authorities suspect that al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula was responsible. - *AFP, October 5; Daily Telegraph, October 7*

October 6, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan and NATO forces killed 20 Taliban fighters in Takhar Province. - *UPI, October 7*

October 6, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Approximately 77 NATO supply tankers were attacked by militants in Nowshera District of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province. Some 54 tankers were completely destroyed in the incident. – *The News International, October 8*

October 6, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Militants attacked a NATO truck terminal in Quetta, Baluchistan Province, destroying 20 oil tankers. – *The News International, October 7*

October 7, 2010 (UNITED STATES): U.S. Admiral Michael Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that the U.S. military will “continue to raise the pressure and certainly seek to kill or capture the top two [leaders] in Al-Qaeda.” He also said that al-Qaeda “has been significantly diminished over the course of the last two or three years but by no means are they no longer lethal.” – *AFP, October 7*

October 7, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber killed one German soldier in Baghlan Province. – *BBC, October 7*

October 7, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Two suspected suicide bombers killed at least nine people at a crowded Sufi shrine in Karachi, Pakistan’s most populated city. – *Reuters, October 7; CNN, October 8*

October 8, 2010 (UNITED STATES): The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement announced that Mohammed Warsame, who pled guilty in the United States in May 2009 to providing material support to al-Qaeda, has been deported to Canada. Warsame, who was born in Somalia, trained at an al-Qaeda military camp and attended lectures delivered by Usama bin Ladin. He is a naturalized Canadian citizen. – *Fox News, October 8*

October 8, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A suspected suicide bomb ripped through a mosque in Takhar Province, killing 20 people including the governor of Kunduz Province. – *AP, October 8*

October 8, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. drone strike killed six militants in the Miran Shah area of North Waziristan Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *CNN, October 8*

October 9, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Approximately 30 militants attacked NATO supply tankers in Bolan district of Baluchistan Province, destroying 29 tankers. – *The News International, October 10*

October 10, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan President Hamid Karzai told reporters that his government is in talks with the Taliban in hopes of finding a political settlement to the country’s conflict. He said, “The Taliban, those of whom who are Afghans and the sons of Afghan soil who have been driven to violence by various factors beyond their control... we want them to come back to their country. They are like kids who have run away...from the family. But those who are a part of Al Qaeda and the other terrorist networks who are ideologically against us or who are working against Afghanistan knowingly and out of the purpose of hatred and enmity, those of course we have to work against.” – *Christian Science Monitor, October 11*

October 10, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. drone strike killed seven militants at a compound in Shewa district of North Waziristan Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *Dawn, October 10*

October 12, 2010 (GLOBAL): Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula released the second issue of its English-language magazine, *Inspire*. The issue includes two articles from Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-Awlaqi. The issue offers a number of tips on how to kill Americans in the United States, including opening fire on lunch-hour crowds in Washington, D.C. to “knock out a few government employees.” – *AP, October 12; NPR, October 12*

October 12, 2010 (UNITED STATES): The trial of accused terrorist Ahmed Ghailani opened in New York City. Ghailani is accused of involvement in the 1998 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Tanzania. – *Voice of America, October 12*

October 12, 2010 (YEMEN): Qasim al-Raymi, a leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), said in an audio recording that the group has created a new army to free Yemen of “crusaders and their apostate agents.” The new army has been named the Aden-Abyan Army, and al-Raymi vowed to overthrow the government of President Ali Abdullah Salih. – *Wall Street Journal, October 13*

October 12, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants fired a rocket at a U.S. helicopter in Kunar Province, wounding eight soldiers and killing an Afghan interpreter. – *AFP, October 12*

October 12, 2010 (IRAQ): The Islamic State of Iraq threatened to kidnap “wives, daughters and sons” of Iraqi politicians and ministers unless the government freed the family of Abu Ayyab al-Masri, who was killed in April 2010. – *AP, October 12*

October 12, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani said that peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban cannot succeed without the assistance of Pakistan. Gilani told reporters that peace talks cannot happen “without us because we are part of the solution. We are not part of the problem.” – *AP, October 12*

October 12, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Militants killed three anti-Taliban tribal elders in Mohmand Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *AP, October 13*

October 13, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani police arrested seven militants who were allegedly planning to assassinate the country’s prime minister in a gun and suicide attack at his house. The suspects are accused of being members of Lashkar-i-Jhangvi. – *AP, October 14*

October 14, 2010 (SOMALIA): Somali President Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad named Somali-American Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed as prime minister. The country’s previous prime minister, Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, resigned on September 21, 2010. – *New York Times, October 14*

October 15, 2010 (NORWAY): Norwegian authorities released David Jakobsen from custody after the Supreme Court rejected an attempt by the police to keep him in detention. Jakobsen, who is an Uzbek national, was one of three suspects arrested in July 2010 for involvement in a terrorist plot connected to the same al-Qa`ida operatives behind plots to target the New York subway system and a mall in the United Kingdom. According to the Associated Press, "Prosecutors later revealed that Jakobsen had been a police informant in the case, but he still faces terrorism charges because the allegations against the group rely partly on events that took place before he approached police last year." The Norwegian court ruled that Jakobsen is not a flight risk. – *AP, October 15*

October 15, 2010 (SWEDEN): Authorities charged two men of Somali descent with plotting terrorist attacks in Somalia. Prosecutors allege that the men are linked to al-Shabab. – *Voice of America, October 15*

October 15, 2010 (YEMEN): Yemeni authorities arrested a man accused of financing al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula. The man, identified as a Yemeni expatriate living in Saudi Arabia, was apprehended at Sana`a International Airport. – *CNN, October 16*

October 15, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Approximately three separate U.S. drone strikes killed 13 militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *CNN, October 16*

October 17, 2010 (WESTERN EUROPE): French Interior Minister Brice Hortefeux told reporters that Saudi Arabia's intelligence services are warning of a new terrorist plot targeting Europe. Saudi officials said that the threat comes from al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula. – *CNN, October 17*

October 17, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters attacked a construction company in Farah Province, kidnapping 20 workers. – *al-Jazeera, October 18*

October 17, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): NATO airstrikes killed Abdul Jamil, who was identified as a Taliban leader for two districts in Baghlan Province. – *CNN, October 19*

October 17, 2010 (MAURITANIA): A Mauritanian court jailed two militants linked to al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb. – *AFP, October 17*

October 17, 2010 (TAJIKISTAN): Tajik security forces reportedly killed three Islamist militants. An Interior Ministry official said that the three militants had trained at a terrorist camp in Afghanistan and were operating in Tajikistan's Rasht region. – *UPI, October 17*

October 18, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters attacked a checkpoint in Helmand Province, killing nine private security guards. All of the guards were Afghan citizens. – *al-Jazeera, October 18*

October 18, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber drove an explosives-laden vehicle into a U.S. military convoy in northern Iraq, killing an Iraqi soldier. – *AFP, October 18*

October 18, 2010 (IRAQ): A bomb ripped through an Iraqi government convoy in Baghdad, killing an official. – *AFP, October 18*

October 18, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Multiple U.S. drones killed at least six militants in the Datta Khel area of North Waziristan Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *Dawn, October 18*

October 18, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Police killed a suicide bomber driving an explosives-laden vehicle in Lakki Marwat District of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province. – *The News International, October 18*

October 18, 2010 (YEMEN): Yemen sentenced Saleh al-Shawish to death for being an al-Qa`ida bomb-maker and for preparing suicide bombers. – *Reuters, October 18*

October 19, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Leon Panetta, the director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, told the media that the CIA's heightened

operations in Pakistan have taken a "serious toll" on al-Qa`ida. – *AFP, October 20*

October 19, 2010 (RUSSIA): Militants attacked the parliament building in Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, killing four people. – *RIA Novosti, October 19*

October 20, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Zachary Chesser, who is 20-years-old, pled guilty in the United States to trying to help Somalia's al-Shabab terrorist group and for threatening the writers of the "South Park" television show for their depiction of the Prophet Muhammad. Chesser, who is from Virginia, faces up to 30 years in prison. – *ABC News, October 20; Christian Science Monitor, October 20*

October 20, 2010 (MAURITANIA): A Mauritanian court sentenced Khadim Ould Semane to death for his role in a militant group linked to al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb. According to Reuters, "Two other members of the group, Sidi Ould Sidna and Marouf Ould Haiba, also were sentenced to death, though both previously had been sentenced to death in May for their roles in the killing of four French tourists in 2007." – *Reuters, October 20*

October 21, 2010 (PHILIPPINES): A bomb exploded aboard a passenger bus in the southern Philippines, killing nine civilians. – *AFP, October 21*

October 22, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A bomb ripped through the vehicle of a district governor for Nangarhar Province. The governor, identified as Khorsheed, was killed. – *AFP, October 21*

October 22, 2010 (PAKISTAN): The United States announced that it will release a \$2 billion military aid package to Pakistan over a five-year period. Marking the announcement, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said, "The United States has no stronger partner when it comes to counterterrorism efforts against the extremists who threaten us both than Pakistan." – *al-Jazeera, October 22*

October 22, 2010 (TURKEY): Prosecutors in a Turkish court accused a man, only identified by his initials A.K., of having ties to al-Qa`ida and of trying to help militants shoot down

Heron military drones in Afghanistan. The 23-year-old mathematics student allegedly had software designed to calculate angles of fire and coordinates of the drones. Authorities also found hydrogen peroxide, gunpowder and other bomb-making materials in the suspect's house. – *Wall Street Journal*, October 23

October 23, 2010 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida spokesman Adam Gadahn released a new video message, calling for Muslims living “in the miserable suburbs of Paris, London and Detroit” to carry out attacks there. “It is the duty of everyone who is sincere in his desire to defend Islam and Muslims today, to take the initiative to perform the individual obligation of jihad...by striking the Zio-Crusader interests,” he said. – *CBS News*, October 23; *Fox News*, October 25

October 23, 2010 (GLOBAL): Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-`Awlaqi released a new video message, saying that Islam is in “severe need for guidance in these dark situations.” Only excerpts of the video were released. – *CNN*, October 23

October 23, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Four Taliban militants disguised as policemen and women launched a suicide attack against a United Nations compound in Herat city. According to Voice of America, “Witnesses said the four militants arrived at the U.N. compound in a car packed with explosives. Accounts from Afghan officials and U.N. workers indicated that two of the attackers blew themselves up in the car, and a third man wearing a suicide vest killed himself as he entered the compound. Afghan police shot and killed the fourth attacker.” No one inside the compound was injured, although at least two Afghan police guarding the facility were wounded. – *Voice of America*, October 23

October 23, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Authorities announced the capture of Rehmatullah, identified as a former bodyguard to Pakistani Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud. He was apprehended in Orakzai Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *CNN*, October 23

October 23, 2010 (RUSSIA): A suicide bomber in an explosives-laden vehicle killed one policeman in the southern Russian republic of Dagestan. – *RIA Novosti*, October 23; *NTD Television*, October 25

October 24, 2010 (YEMEN): Yemen's foreign minister estimates that there are some 400 al-Qa`ida fighters active in the country. – *AP*, October 24

October 25, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Omar Khadr pled guilty in a U.S. military court to killing a U.S. Army sergeant during a battle in Afghanistan. Khadr, who has been detained at Guantanamo Bay for eight years, will be sent to Canada in a year to serve out his sentence as part of his plea agreement. – *AP*, October 25

October 26, 2010 (TURKEY): Turkish authorities announced that they detained 12 people in Istanbul suspected of providing support to al-Qa`ida militants fighting in Afghanistan. – *Reuters*, October 26

October 27, 2010 (GLOBAL): Usama bin Ladin purportedly released a new audio message, threatening to kill French citizens for their country's support of the U.S.-led mission in Afghanistan and for banning face-covering Muslim veils. “How can it be right that you [the French] participate in the occupation of our lands, support the Americans in the killing of our women and children and yet want to live in peace and security?” he said. “It is a simple and clear equation: As you kill, you will be killed. As you capture, you will be captured. And as you threaten our security, your security will be threatened. The way to safeguard your security is to cease your oppression and its impact on our nation, most importantly your withdrawal from the ill-fated Bush war in Afghanistan.” – *AP*, October 27

October 27, 2010 (UNITED STATES): U.S. authorities arrested a Pakistan-born, naturalized U.S. citizen in a sting operation where the suspect believed he was part of an al-Qa`ida plot to bomb the Washington, D.C. subway system. The suspect, Farooque Ahmed, also told authorities that he had trained himself in firearms and hand-to-hand combat and was planning to travel to the Pakistan-

Afghanistan region to kill Americans. Ahmed moved to the United States in 1993 and lived in Ashburn, Virginia. According to a Reuters report describing the indictment, “From April to October 25, Ahmed allegedly conducted surveillance, videotaped, photographed, and drew diagrams of the Arlington Cemetery, Courthouse, Crystal City and Pentagon City Metrorail stations and offered suggestions about where to place explosives to kill people in simultaneous attacks planned for 2011...He allegedly told an agent posing as an al Qaeda operative that an attack executed between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. on the Washington Metro would cause the most casualties.” – *Reuters*, October 28

October 27, 2010 (PAKISTAN): U.S. drone strikes killed at least six militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *AFP*, October 27

October 27, 2010 (SOMALIA): An al-Shabab firing squad publicly executed two teenage girls in Beledweyne on charges that they had spied for the government. The girls were reportedly 15 and 14-years-old. – *Voice of America*, October 28

October 28, 2010 (FRANCE): France announced that it could begin withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan as early as 2011. French officials insisted that there was “absolutely no link” between the announcement and an October 27 threat delivered against the country by Usama bin Ladin. France has approximately 3,500 troops deployed in Afghanistan, mostly east of Kabul. – *Christian Science Monitor*, October 28; *Radio France International*, October 28

October 29, 2010 (GLOBAL): Authorities disrupted a major international terrorist plot involving explosives in packages mailed to the United States from Yemen. They were able to disrupt the plot due to intelligence provided by the Saudi Arabian government, which gathered the tip from an al-Qa`ida militant who had surrendered to Saudi authorities. On November 5, al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) claimed responsibility for the plot. The AQAP statement said, “We will continue to strike blows against

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

American interests and the interest of America's allies." – *CNN, October 29; CNN, November 5; Voice of America, November 1*

October 29, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber attacked a café in Balad Ruz in Diyala Province, killing at least 25 people. The café is known to be popular among Shi'a Kurds. – *Reuters, October 30; AFP, October 29*

October 29, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Militants set fire to a NATO supply truck 12 miles south of Quetta in Baluchistan Province. – *AFP, October 29*

October 29, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Militants opened fire on a NATO supply truck 174 miles south of Quetta in Baluchistan Province. – *AFP, October 29*

October 29, 2010 (MOROCCO): Moroccan security officials announced that they recently disrupted two radical Islamist cells linked to al-Qa`ida in the country. The cells were reportedly plotting attacks in Morocco and recruiting fighters to send to Iraq. One of the cell members is a Yemeni national who allegedly has close ties to al-Qa`ida. – *Reuters, October 29*

October 30, 2010 (INDONESIA): Indonesian authorities announced that they detained Taufik Marzuki, a suspected terrorist behind a number of attacks in Sumatra. Taufik, the head of the Islam Defenders Front of Aceh, was captured last month. – *Jakarta Post, October 30*

October 31, 2010 (IRAQ): Nine militants wearing suicide vests stormed the Church of Our Lady of Salvation in Baghdad's Karrada district. Police entered the church and killed eight of the militants, while the ninth detonated his suicide vest. At least 52 people, including civilians and members of the security forces, were killed. – *Telegraph, November 1; al-Jazeera, November 2*

October 31, 2010 (TURKEY): A suicide bomber detonated explosives at the popular tourist spot Taksim Square in Istanbul, injuring at least 30 people. The bomber targeted a bus full of police officers. The Kurdistan Workers' Party denied involvement in the attack. – *Guardian, October 31; Voice of America, November 1*